



# Islamabad POST

Friday, June 04, 2021

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**Tajikistan President stresses on diversifying the bilateral relations**

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**Use of tech vital for transparent elections: Fawad**

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## Briefs

### Pak fully supports Palestine

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Pakistan has successfully fought the Palestine issue at all international fora to stop Israeli atrocities against unarmed and innocent Palestinians. Talking to Secretary General of Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al Arabia Qari Hanif Jalandhari in Islamabad on Thursday, he said Saudi Arabia has played a commendable role in convening OIC emergency meeting on the issue after attack on Al-Quds mosque. He said Pakistan has tabled resolution in the special meeting of UNHRC.

### PDM's doors still open for PPP: Fazl

BUREAU REPORT

MULTAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Thursday said that doors of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an opposition parties' alliance, were still open for Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Addressing a press conference in Multan, he however said by not giving resignations, the present government's life was being prolonged. He wondered as to why politicians became a tool in the hands of the country's establishment. "Why are opposition parties wasting their time by distancing themselves from the PDM?" he questioned.

### Farrukh slams Bilawal's remarks

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Thursday advised Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to abstain from giving analysis on the economic affairs. "When a person does not know anything about economy, he should avoid issuing wrong statements on such important matters," said the minister in a statement. Chiding the PPP chairman, he said Bilawal had naive understanding of the economic related matters.

## Pak, China, Afghanistan peace linked

FM Qureshi says we attach great importance to this dialogue enhancing cooperation and coordination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday said that the peace, prosperity and economic development of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan are linked. In his virtual address at the 4th China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, the foreign minister said Pakistan had always strived to strengthen its relations with China and Afghanistan in the bilateral as well as regional context. "We attach great importance to this dialogue enhancing cooperation and coordination," he said. Qureshi said that it was about four years ago that the three countries had conceived this trilateral forum for discussing collaborative efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region, enhancing security and counter-terrorism cooperation and deepening regional connectivity and shared economic development through meaningful projects.

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### CPEC to continue despite all ifs and buts

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has maintained that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was a transformational project and it remained the Government's number one priority. The Foreign Minister maintained that CPEC had contributed to Pakistan's national development and stressed that Pakistan remained committed to making CPEC a High-Quality Demonstration Project of BRI. He expressed these remarks in a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong. During the meeting, views were exchanged on China-Pakistan bilateral relations, CPEC, 70th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations and vaccine cooperation between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon in a meeting with Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani. - DNA

### Pakistan welcomes Kuwaiti decision

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Kuwait has recently agreed to ease visa restrictions for Pakistani nationals, which had been in place since 2011. Pakistan welcomes the resolution of this long pending matter between the two countries. The foundation for this development was laid during a series of engagements between Foreign Minister Qureshi and his Kuwaiti counterpart. The meetings entailed extensive deliberations on the matter of easing visa restrictions for Pakistani nationals. In accordance with the commitments reached between the two Foreign Ministers, Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior extended invitation to the Minister of Interior of Pakistan to visit Kuwait and formalize lifting of visa restrictions imposed on Pakistani nationals.

### 19 projects completed under CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have so far completed 19 projects under the umbrella of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor while 28 are under-construction. The Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, at a weekly media briefing in Islamabad, said both countries are committed to implementation of CPEC for quality economic growth and enhanced regional connectivity. He said over the past seven years, CPEC projects have created more than 26,000 jobs and boosted local power industry. The spokesperson said the CPEC motorway projects have created over 50,000 jobs.

## Ties with Tajikistan need diversification

Chirman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani meets President of Tajikistan; calls for enhanced bilateral cooperation

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has said that Pakistan attaches high importance to its relations with Tajikistan based on strong historic, religious and cultural links and there is a dire need to enhance the trade and economic ties in accordance with a true potential for mutual benefit of the people in both countries.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan here on Thursday. Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi and Ambassador of Pakistan in Tajikistan Imran Haider were also present during the meeting. Chairman Senate said that the visit of President has further strengthened our bilateral cooperation in all areas of mutual interest. He said that the signing of landmark joint declaration

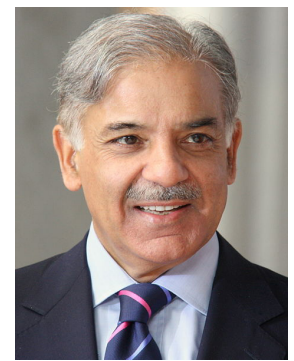
and a number of agreements / MoUs in the areas of art and culture, disaster management and trade and commerce between the two countries is a welcome development. Sanjrani appreciated the participation of high-level parliamentary delegation of Tajikistan in the 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) in Islamabad.

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## PML slams economic policies

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Leader of Opposition in National Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has not confirmed the economic statistics presented by the government which left a big question mark.



Addressing the pre-budget seminar on Thursday, the PML-N President said that the fake government knows the art of manipulation. He said the mini budget presented by the government in the past is also in front of everyone and inflation has broken the backs of the people in three years. The PML-N president said

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ISLAMABAD: Speaker of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Sentop (L) interacts with a student during his visit to Faisal Mosque. - DNA

## Indonesian envoy lauds NIH role in tackling virus

ED NIH Maj General Dr. Aamer briefs the ambassador about Covid situation and steps taken by the govt to deal with the pandemic

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia Adam M. Tugio visited the National Institute of Health (NIH) and received by Executive Director National Institute of Health, Islamabad, Major General Dr. Aamer Ikram. The two officials exchanged



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Netanyahu foes push for quick vote to end his rule - Page 07

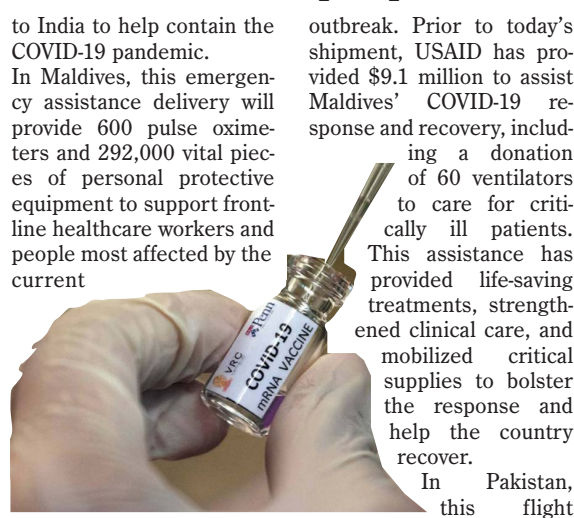
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## U.S. airlifts COVID-19 supplies to Pakistan, other states

This airlift exemplifies the United States' whole-of-govt response to ensure assistance reaches people who need it quickly

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has airlifted emergency medical supplies to Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to help save lives, stop the spread of COVID-19, and continue to meet the urgent health needs across South Asia. This new airlift follows three shipments of COVID-19 relief supplies by the U.S. Government to Nepal and the delivery of seven emergency air shipments



to India to help contain the COVID-19 pandemic. In Maldives, this emergency assistance delivery will provide 600 pulse oximeters and 292,000 vital pieces of personal protective equipment to support frontline healthcare workers and people most affected by the current

outbreak. Prior to today's shipment, USAID has provided \$9.1 million to assist Maldives' COVID-19 response and recovery, including a donation of 60 ventilators to care for critically ill patients. This assistance has provided life-saving treatments, strengthened clinical care, and mobilized critical supplies to bolster the response and help the country recover.

In Pakistan, this flight will bring 1,200 pulse oximeters, and 340,000 pieces of personal protective equipment for healthcare professionals. The United States and Pakistan have worked together closely to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and this donation is being made at the Government of Pakistan's request. Prior to this flight, the U.S. Government allocated \$40 million to Pakistan for COVID-19 response assistance, including a donation of 200 ventilators to care for COVID-19 patients.

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## Briefs

## PC completes pre-bidding process of SME Bank

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The pre-bidding process for the privatization of SME Bank has been completed while parties interested in the transaction have been shortlisted, Privatization Commission (PC) said on Thursday. According to press statement issued by the Finance Ministry, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, ShaukatTarin, chaired a meeting here at the Finance Division to review the progress on the privatization of the SME Bank. Minister for Privatization Muhammad MianSoomro also participated the meeting along with Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance and Revenue, DrWaqar Masood; Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Dr Reza Baqir and senior officials of the Ministry of Finance, Privatization Commission and State Bank of Pakistan. The commission informed the meeting participant that the PC Board had also completed initial discussion/consultations with the short-listed bidders to facilitate them in the completion of their due diligence process. The Privatization Commission also informed the Finance Minister of the equity requirement of the SME Bank on which the minister directed SAPM on Revenue to assess the requirements and prepare a proposal for strengthening the balance sheet of the SME Bank. The Minister for Privatization also informed the meeting that they were constantly in touch with the potential investors and would keep updating the Finance Ministry, SBP and all the other relevant stakeholders of the new developments.

## COAS Bajwa strengthening country's defense

DNA

LAHORE: Khawaja Rameez Hassan, Deputy Secretary Information, PML-Q Punjab, in a press release said that Pakistan Armed Forces is using its professionalism to overcome the challenges posed to the state on internal and external fronts. Army Chief General QamarJavedBajwa is taking practical steps to immortalise the country's defense capability, said Khawaja Rameez Hassan. He said that the youth should play a practical role for the supremacy of the state in other sectors including social media. He further said that the youth should play a practical role for the supremacy of the state in other sectors as well.

## Nestlé Pakistan introduces paper straws

DNA

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan has introduced paper straws across its entire ready-to-drink (RTD) product range, making it the first food and beverage company in Pakistan to do so. The initiative will eliminate over 400 million plastic straws, marking a breakthrough in its sustainable packaging transformation journey. This is in line with the company's global pledge to make its packaging 100% recyclable and reusable by 2025. Nestlé Pakistan's brands - NESVITA, MILO®, FRUITAVITALS, NESFRUTA and NES-CAFÉ's RTD products - are now in the market with paper straws that are made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper. SamerChedid, Chief Executive Officer, Nestlé Pakistan said, "We have introduced paper straws across our RTD products that have been sourced responsibly, meet stringent quality requirements and are safe to drink from." Highlighting Nestlé's global sustainable packaging transformation journey, Chedid stressed, "Our vision is that none of our packaging, including plastics, ends up in landfill nor in oceans, lakes and rivers. To achieve this, we have set ourselves the commitment of ensuring 100% of our packaging is reusable and recyclable by 2025, and the switch to paper straws is a major step towards this."

## Govt urged to abolish duty on import of machinery

Chairman ICCI Founder Group M Akram Farid hosted a luncheon in honor of newly elected Vice President FPCCI Nasir Mansoor Qureshi

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Chairman ICCI Founder Group M AkramFarid hosted a luncheon in honor of newly elected Vice President FPCCI Nasir Mansoor Qureshi.

In his address, Chairman MianAkramFarid congratulated Nasir M. Qureshi on being elected Vice President of the Federation and said that the election of Nasir Qureshi as Vice President of the Federation by UBG is a victory of truth and justice. It is a matter of pride for Founder Group. The recent success is the result of unity in the ranks of the business community. He said that in the budget, the Government should abolish all duties and taxes imposed on the import of industrial machinery and plants so that the industrial sector could upgrade itself by importing modern machinery and plants. The development of value-added products will also increase our exports manifold. He said that the hotel industry has suffered a lot due to the outbreak of Corona virus so the Government should announce a special relief package for this



ISLAMABAD: Chairman ICCI Founder Group M. Akram Farid presenting flowers to newly elected Vice President FPCCI Nasir M. Qureshi. - DNA

sector in the budget. He assured that the Founder Group and the ICCI would co-operate fully with the newly elected Vice President of the Federation, Nasir M. Qureshi, in their efforts to address the problems of the business community. Addressing the audience, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Is-

lamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, congratulated Nasir M. Qureshi on being elected Vice President of FPCCI Capital Office for 2020-21 and expressed the hope that he from the platform of the Federation, businessmen and industrialists will play their useful role in solving the problems

of the community. He said that all the chambers of the country, including the ICCI, have submitted their budget proposals to the Government, so he demanded that the Government seriously consider these proposals and make them part of the budget, which would create problems for

the business community. There will be better solutions and there will be an increase in industrial and commercial activities which will strengthen our economy. The Government financial system is in a shambles which can be improved with the consultation of the business community.

## Anti-polio campaign to start from June 7

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The next Polio Eradication Campaign in Faisalabad district would continue from 7th to 11 June and in the district 1.327 million children up to the age of five years would be administered polio drops and 3549 teams would perform duty and all necessary arrangements had been made finalized in this regard. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali was informed during the meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee. ADCG Khur-

ram Pervaiz CEO Health Dr. Mushtaq Sipra DHO Bilal Ahmed and other officers of various departments were also present. Deputy Commissioner said that all relevant departments should performed their duty with vigilantly so that 100 % targets should be achieved. He said that all arrangements and implementation should be done according to micro-plan so that the weaknesses and shortcomings could be rectified. He clarified that every round of polio was important therefore, awareness of parents would continued

during the campaign. He said that all arrangements should be made finalize in tehsil level also and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He said that he himself would monitor the campaign. DHO briefed the house on final arrangements of next Polio campaign and said that duty roster has been issued in this regard. **30 more tested positive** As many as 30 people were tested positive for the COVID-19 in Faisalabad during the last 24 hours. According to the health department spokesperson,

725 coronavirus tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 704 while 19,575 patients had so far recovered from the disease. He said 339 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital, 133 at the DHQ Hospital and 150 at Government General Hospital Gulshah Muhammad Abad for the COVID-19 patients. At present, 126 patients were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 46 at DHQ Hospital and 31 were admitted to General Hospital.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali presides over the meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee. - DNA

## No vaccination, no salaries, Sindh CM warns govt employees

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday declared coronavirus vaccination mandatory for every citizen of the province and ordered that the salaries of non-vaccinated government officials should be stopped from July. He stated this while residing over a meeting of the Provincial Task Force on coronavirus at CM House. "We have to secure our citizens by taking some dras-

tic measures," he said and directed the health department to establish vaccination coverage facilities in every nook and corner of the province. "I want at least 300 basic units to be declared as vaccination centers in the rural areas with a target of vaccinating 30,000 people per day," he said. Murad Ali Shah, giving another target to the health department, said that five mobile vaccination teams should be established on every taluka level. "We have 605 talukas/tehsils and they must vaccinate at least 60,000 people per

day," he ordered. The CM also directed the health department to give a target of 10,000 vaccination to 90 private hospitals already allowed to vaccinate people. He directed the health minister to register more private hospitals for vaccination. Taking a policy decision, Murad Ali Shah directed the Chief Secretary to give a month of June to all the govt/semi govt/ local govt employees for getting themselves vaccinated and stop salaries of those officials who fail to get themselves vaccinated by the end of this month.

## Use of tech essential for transparent elections, says Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Thursday said the use of modern technology would be essential for free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

"The use of technology is vital for every sector as we will have to keep pace with today's world," he said during a meeting with a delegation of Pakistan Bar Council and District Bar Council Faisalabad. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Shahbaz Gill was also present in the meeting. Fawad said the government desired to hold elections in a manner so that no one could point the finger over their transparency and fairness. He urged the lawyers community to give their input about the proposed electoral reforms. The minister said the Faisalabad Bar Council could also utilise the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to conduct its elections as Rawalpindi, Multan and Islamabad bar councils had already demanded the government to provide EVMs. He said Pakistan's interest was supreme to all. As the lawyers community were playing a significant role in the country as evident from



their valiant struggle for the supremacy of Constitution and rule of law. The minister assured that the proposal to set up a high court bench in Faisalabad would be considered. He said the lawyers community would also be provided homes under the Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme launched by the Prime Minister Imran Khan. SAPM Shahbaz Gill on the occasion said the lawyers would be provided houses on merit in the low cost housing scheme. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, he said, was well aware of the lawyers' problems and asked them to prepare recommendations in that regard. Representatives of the bar associations said they were standing with the government for the rule of law. The bar associations, they said, would play a leading role on national issues. - APP

## FPCCI hosts cultural exhibition

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Continuing with our tradition to support women entrepreneurs, FPCCI has hosted a high-profile Digital Cultural Exhibition at Federation House, Karachi. The exhibition was well-attended; notably by Ms. GhazalaSaifi, MNA as Chief Guest; H.E. Birgit Nicole Kuhlmann from German Embassy; and Mr. Yousuf Bashir Qureshi aka YBQ, world-renowned designer. Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo, President FPCCI, expressed his satisfaction over the successful exhibition and welcomed women entrepreneurs to use FPCCI's platform for their future endeavors as well. Mr. HanifLakhany & Mr. Nasir Khan, VPs FPCCI, visited all the stalls set up by women entrepreneurs and women working from home to encourage them and give them business tips. Convener of FPCCI's Sindh Regional Committee on Women Entrepreneurs, Ms. NazliAbidNisar, spoke on the importance of encouraging women and bringing their talent and business acumen into the limelight. Mr. Muzaffar Arif from PACC and Mr. Abid Nisar from KCCI also graced the occasion.

## 4 policemen suspended over misconduct

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer Muhammad Sohail Chaudhary suspended four officials of Sargodha Road police station on charges of misconduct and abuse of powers on Thursday.

A police spokesman said the CPO received complaints about Sub Inspector Musaddaq, Assistant Sub Inspector RanaMaqsood and their two colleagues who were involved in misconduct and abuse of powers. On these complaints, the CPO suspended officials and issued show-cause notices.

## Biometric attendance to be started

The Police Department has decided to start biometric attendance of police officials as well as officers in all police offices.

A police spokesman said on Thursday that 306 biometric devices have been allotted to the police offices across the province including 31 devices in Faisalabad district, 12 in Jhang, 10 in Toba Tek Singh and 9 in Chiniot district.

He said that these devices will be installed in police offices and thumb impressions of all police officers and officers will be fed before June 10 in addition to inserting their data whereas biometric attendance is expected to be started from June 11, 2021. All police officers and officials will be bound for biometric attendance on biometric devices and those who fail to put their thumbs on the device for biometric attendance will be considered absent, spokesman added. - APP

## Groom among two arrested over aerial firing

FAISALABAD: The police on Thursday claimed to have arrested two people, including a groom, over aerial firing during a function. A police spokesman said Rana Zeeshan Khan of Manj Chowk arranged Mehndi function in connection of his wedding ceremony during which the guests resorted to aerial firing. They also made video and display of weapons and spread it through social media. City Police Officer (CPO) Sohail Chaudhary and SSO Operation Muhammad Afzal took serious notice of the incident and directed the police to arrest the accused. Ghulam Muhammad Abad police station conducted raids and arrested groom Rana Zeeshan Khan and his friend Syed SaadHussain while four accomplices Muhammad Azam, RanaAqeel, etc fled. The police recovered weapons and started investigation by registering a case against the accused.

## Man's body found from canal

The body of a youth was found from a canal in the area of Dijkot police station on Thursday. A police spokesman said some passersby spotted the body of a 22-year-old man in Rakh Branch Canal nearChak No 272-RB Samundri Road and informed the police. The Rescue 1122 fished out the body and handed over to the police which sent it to a mortuary for postmortem. - APP

## FESCO issues shutdown program

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has issued shutdown program for Monday for repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines.

According to the program, power supply from Ghausia Colony, Mamonkanj City, KhudaYar, Al-awwal, Bangla and Khawaja Habib feeders emanating from 132-KV Mamonkanj grid station, Sheeraza, Ravi, PirSalahud Din, TSML, Zafar Chowk, Sugar Mills, Khiddarwala, Kanjwani and KallarWala feeders originating from 132-KV ManjhalaBagh grid station, Pindi, Jhamra, Tandianwala City, Tayyabah Town and Best Chipboard feeders emanating from 132-KV Tandianwala grid station will remain suspended from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 noon whereas Ejaz Town, Allied Hospital, City, Gulshan Colony, new Civil Line, Raja Chowk and Sadar Bazaar feeders originating from 132-KV Agri University grid station will observe shutdown from 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Monday (June 07). - APP

## Indonesian Consulate General organizes VILC 2021

This course is hosted by the Government of Indonesia to provide opportunities for the publics of Sindh Province to learn how to speak Bahasa Indonesia. The program started out with the basic level of Indonesian language lessons which is BIPA 1

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: To cater for the growing public demands for knowing Indonesian language, theConsulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Karachi has initiated a Virtual Indonesian Language Course (VILC) in June 2021. The program commenced on Tuesday, 1 June 2021 and was officially opened by the Consul General of the Republic of Indonesia in Karachi Dr. June KuncoroHadiningrat. This course is hosted by the Government of Indonesia to provide opportunities for the publics of Sindh Province to learn how to speak Bahasa Indonesia. The program started out with the basic level of Indonesian language lessons which is BIPA 1. First batch of VILC will go on for three months, from 1 June 2021 to 31 August 2021.



During his opening remarks, Dr. Hadiningrat appreciated the students' enthusiasm to learn Indonesian language, while encouraging participants to make most of the course, so that it will equip them with the necessary knowledge of Indonesian language, especially for those who are interested to study, work, or visit Indonesia in the future. Throughout the course, participants will also have the chance to learn about Indonesian cultures and traditions, to immerse themselves in language learning experience. Furthermore, the Indonesian Consul General is highly hopeful that this program would also contribute to promoting the existing good relations between the two countries through cultural understanding. In the future, VILC is expected to continuously attract more people to learn about Indonesia, and by which it will also become the precursor to motivate them to pursue opportunities to further study or travel in Indonesia.

## Briefs

### SC extends pre-arrest bail plea of a NAB accused

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday extended the pre-arrest bail plea of Anees Zakariya, a National Accountability Bureau (NAB) accused for taking refunds on fake invoices. A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Munib Akhtar heard the bail plea filed by Anis Zakaria accused of taking refund on fake invoices. The petitioner was sole proprietor of M/s Al-Ubaid Enterprises and he availed illegal sales tax refund on fake invoices which caused huge loss of Government exchequer. During the course of proceedings, Advocate Shahab Sarki counsel for the accused said that his client got pay orders amounting Rs 25 million. He said that the accused also submitted a plea bargain application before the NAB. Justice Bandial asked what NAB decided on the plea bargain application. The Additional Prosecutor General NAB replied that the plea bargain application was not in accordance with the law. The accused wanted to bargain by paying Rs 25 million and the actual amount was many times more. Justice Bandial observed that the NAB should treat businessmen differently from other suspects. The court had stated at the last hearing that the plea bargain application would be filed, he added. He said that the NAB should have decided the case even if it rejected the application after review.

### Foreign remittances reaches \$29.1 billion

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr. Shahbaz Gul on Thursday appreciated the foreign expatriates who sent foreign remittances to the country which have now reached \$29.1 billion from \$21.7 billion last year, exhibiting 34 per cent increase. In a statement issued here, he said besides tremendous increase in foreign remittances, it is for the first time in country history that Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) had amassed record Rs 4,100 billion as tax revenue. Moreover, he said because of tremendous financial policies of the government, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has also registered 3.94 per cent growth during current financial year and added in case foreign remittances are included the Gross National Product (GNP) can register 6.5 per cent mark. "Another achievement registered during present government regime that Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSE) has crossed level of 48,000 points in 54 months," he added. He said these were the major achievements on part of government which were not being digested by the corrupt opposition elements. "Now, the shop of the corrupt elements was closed," he concluded. - APP

### Saira Peter releases composition of music

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Famous multi-award winning film music director Khwaja Khurshid Anwar's song "Dil Ka Sitar", sung by Saira Peter, was released on Thursday. The track was composed by KKA for film "Taan Sain" but none of the film's songs were released as the film was not completed. Now, decades later, music director's son Khwaja Irfan Anwar gifted the song to Saira Peter to record in her own inimitable style, said a press release issued here. Talking to media, Saira Peter said "I feel honored to present 'Gaye Dil Ka Sitar'. It was originally recorded by Madame Noor Jehan but for unknown reasons was not released.

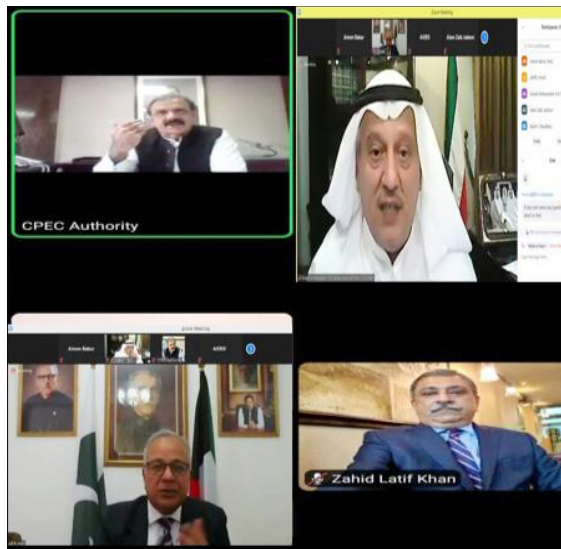
## AIERD organizes webinar to promote Pak-Kuwait ties

He appreciated govt officials of Kuwait, especially of Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi for strengthening the bilateral relation. Mr. Mudassar Tipu, DG China Desk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, threw light on brief history of China-Pakistan relations and CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Zahid Latif Khan, chairman AIERD, welcomed the guests by congratulating Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Syed Sajjad Haider for their efforts to resolve the visa issue, which was a matter of concern for many years, while talking at the webinar organized by Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development (AIERD). He highlighted that there are many areas, where both countries can enhance their bilateral relation. Further, he mentioned that Vision 2035 of Kuwait and CPEC provides an excellent opportunity to open new avenues of cooperation.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, Syed Sajjad Haider, spoke eloquently on the history of Pakistan Kuwait relations while hoping for greater opportunities in future. He also elaborated on the recent visa development and encouraged both communities to further integrate in terms of business opportunities. He appreciated the role of government officials of Kuwait, especially of Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi for strengthening the bilateral relation. Mr. Mudassar Tipu, DG China Desk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, threw light on brief history of China-Pakistan relations and CPEC. He appreciated the work of AIERD and hoped to further enhance Paki-



stan-Kuwait bilateral relations. He emphasized that both countries should work together to find avenues for inclusion in CPEC. While addressing the gath-

ering Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi Ambassador of Kuwait emphasized that Kuwait needs Pakistan as a brother. He also underlined the contributions of skilled labor of Pakistan in Kuwait and appreciated Pakistan's support during COVID-19. He specifically mentioned the cooperation in the fields of medical and food. He underscored that cooperation under CPEC would be mutually beneficial for both countries. The event concluded with the speech of chief guest, Lt. Gen. Asim Saleem Bajwa, Chairman CPEC Authority who spoke about the progress of CPEC, since the creation of CPEC Authority. He also spoke about the investment op-

portunities for Kuwait in special economic zones and agricultural sector. He offered Kuwait to be a part of economic zones and discussed the future prospects of Kuwait-Pakistan joint ventures through this historic initiative. He specifically mentioned about the opportunities in fields of agriculture and industrial cooperation. He shared with audience that CPEC route will be a secure and cost-effective route for trade between Kuwait and China. Additionally, the CPEC will reduce the time of travel by 145 days and will save US\$ 2457 on each container. He concluded by saying "It is right time to join the hand to promote relation.

### INL role in countering narcotics appreciated

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Narcotics Control, Akbar Durrani Thursday appreciated the role of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) in countering narcotics in Pakistan. The level and scope of cooperation needs to be increased in order to completely eliminate the menace of narcotics from the society, he expressed these view during a meeting with Director INL-P Dorothy Ngutter, said a news release. Director INL-P said that her organization was willing to enhance cooperation and extend support in different areas of human resource management with specific focus on training and capacity building of officials of Anti-Narcotics force. The Secretary welcomed the encouraging offer and said that Pakistan had been devising a strategy to reduce the demand of drugs. Director INL-P appreciated the approach of Pakistan in dealing with narcotics control. She further said that rehabilitation and treatment of drug addicts also need to be paid close attention to. Durrani said complete elimination of drugs from society is Pakistan's utmost preference and the government will continue to work in that direction. The secretary assured all possible cooperation with INL to counter narcotics. - APP

### DC to enhance surveillance to control dengue

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Amir Aqique Khan on Thursday directed officials of the district health authority and other departments to expedite surveillance activities to control dengue. Chairing a meeting to review anti-dengue arrangements, the DC directed officials to remove stagnant water in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding after rain and submerged water. Amir directed to devise an effective anti-dengue micro plan to prevent the spread of dengue larvae. The DC said that necessary medicines along with the latest equipment have been provided to the health department. On the occasion, Chief Executive Officer Health Authority Dr. Faiza Kanwal informed that surveillance to check the breeding of larvae is underway in the district, while indoor and outdoor surveillance have been completed in the areas of Faizabad, Shamasabad, Gulshan Dadan Khan, Mehmoodabad and Pandora. She advised the residents to adopt precautionary measures and inform the department immediately if dengue larvae are found in their houses.

### Target set to administer polio drops for children

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Around 0.3 million children up to the age of five years will be administered anti-polio drops across Attock district during a five days campaign being launched from June 7. Health authorities informed the participants of a meeting held to review the implementation of anti polio campaign at deputy commissioner office on Thursday. The meeting was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Attock Imran Hamid Sheikh while Additional Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Arif Khan, Chief executive District health authority, Dr Jawad Ellahi, district health officer Dr Junaid Tariq, deputy district health officer Dr Kashif Hussain, district surveillance officer Dr Talib Hussain, district Superintendent vaccination Mohammad Ayub Khan and representatives of WHO and other officers were also present on the occasion. The health officials informed that as many as 1100 teams have been constituted; they will be present at all entry and exit points of the city, bus stands, railway stations, hospitals and health centers.

### Benazir Income Support Program not renamed

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Social Welfare, Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar has clarified that the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has not been renamed. During Question Hour in the Upper House on Thursday, Dr. Sania Nishtar said that BISP was established under the BISP Act and it still exists today with its name unchanged. Only the photographs of public figures have been removed from the program by order of the court, she added. The SAPM also said that a new program has been launched to replace Benazir Debit Card which will provide assistance through biometrics. Dr Sania Nishtar further said that the government has launched Ehsaas Kifalat, Ehsaas Wasila Education, Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program and Ehsaas Development Program for the welfare of the public while the Waseela Education Program has been digitized. She said that the scope of Waseela Education Program has been expanded from 50 to 150 districts to eradicate corruption, while its operational cost has been reduced from 8% to 3%. "We have also scrapped the outsourcing model because it used to award huge contracts to NGOs", she said. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan in a group photo with members of Punjab Assembly and think tank group. - DNA

## Graduation ceremony held at PAF finishing school



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Graduation Ceremony of the 49th batch of PAF Finishing School was held at the Officers' Mess, PAF Complex Islam-

abad. Begum Mariam Baber President Pakistan Air Force Women Association (PAFWA) & Patron-in-Chief of PAF Finishing School was the chief guest on the occasion. The chief guest awarded certificates to the graduating students. Begum Mariam Baber congratulated the students on successful completion of their personality development programme. She also praised the standards of training at the institution and

lauded the efforts of the faculty members in grooming the womenfolk of our society. Earlier, Director Finishing School Ms. Zeba Shaukat presented a report highlighting the main aspects of the training which are aimed at transforming young girls into useful members of society. Established in July 1996, PAF Finishing School is the first of its kind in Asia, offering various courses in communication skills, languages, management, art of self-presentation, domestic science, general culture, cuisine, protocol, art, child care, introduction to psychology and spiritual enrichment. The school is an initiative of PAFWA for the grooming of young girls and the promotion of education in the country.

## Commissioner PRA visits RCCI



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Punjab

Revenue Authority (PRA) Ms. Tahira Javed has assured the business community that no one would be harassed on the account of tax collection and

registration notices. During her visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), while addressing the office bearers, members, and representatives from the trade associations she welcomed RCCI's suggestions on tax matters, registration and payment of dues. She assured that maximum facilities would be provided to the business community and tax payers. On the occasion, the President of the Chamber Nasir Mirza said that the Chamber's platform is available to enhance the close liaison between the tax authority and the business community. He suggested setting up a PRA help desk in the Chamber.

## Police to protect life and property of people

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Police was working day and night to ensure peace and security in the capital area, however it was very difficult to maintain law and order without involving the local community and citizens. Therefore, community policing was the need of the hour to maintain better security in the city. This was stated by Qazijameel-ur-Rehman, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad while addressing a reception hosted by Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG and Sardar Tahir Mahmood President Islamabad State Agents Association in honor of police and business community. The representative of various markets, ICCI members and senior police officers were present at the occasion.



The IG said that Islamabad police and traffic police officers were always on duty to serve the citizens. He said that business community has always been cooperative with the police in its endeavor to maintain law and order situation in Islamabad, which was laudable. He thanked the business community for joining hands with police and cooperating with it to ensure peace and security in the city. He further added that he was personally supervising the traffic matters in Islamabad and said that black glasses and non-patterned number plates were being removed. He further said that E-challan process had been started in Islamabad. He appealed to the business community to continue cooperating with police for maintaining better security in the city. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the business community was proud of the performance of Islamabad Police. He stressed that cameras should be installed in markets and mohallas like all over the world to detect culprits. He said the business community of Islamabad should install CCTV cameras in their markets and connect them with Safe City project.

## SC adjourns Khursheed bail plea

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned hearing of former opposition leader in the National Assembly and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah's post-arrest bail plea till Friday. A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Mushir Alam, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan heard the case. During the course of proceedings, Advocate Mahkdoom Ali Shah counsel for Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah while continuing his arguments said that the NAB closed its inquiry against his client in 2014. All the statements of Khursheed Shah including income tax were on record, he added. Justice Sardar Tariq asked how many foreign trips did Khursheed Shah's family? According to NAB, 140 foreign visits had been made, he added. The counsel said that travel expenses and details were not part of the reference. The NAB did not allege travel expenses in the reference as not a single word related to travel expenses was part of the reference, he added. Justice Tariq asked what about the autonomy of family members? The counsel replied that dependence of family members was clear in the tax returns. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei received Senator Abdul Qayyum at the Palestine Embassy. The Senator expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and supported our cause for freedom against the heinous actions of the Israeli occupation against the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. - DNA

## Briefs

## ANF urged to get equipment for scanning

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Narcotics Control, Akbar Durrani on Thursday said ANF must purchase state of the art equipment for effective scanning of vehicles for drugs checking. The secretary expressed these views while chairing the meeting of internal sub-committee on National Fund for Control of Drugs Abuse (NFCA), said a news release.

The meeting was attended by the senior officials of Anti-Narcotics Force and the Ministry of Narcotics Control. He also said that special attention needed to be paid to the area of rehabilitation since it plays a significant role in the overall development against drugs abuse. He said that request should be made to the Finance Division for the opening of Endowment Fund account to meet the recurring expenditure of Model Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres (MATRCs). "We should have proper medication and required equipment at these centres as per international standards" Durrani said. Furthermore, it was mutually decided that the campaigns against drugs abuse should be spread to provincial level in order to increase the reach of the campaign and have better results.

## Aamir visits Gawalmandi to inspect Nullah work

RAWALPINDI: Member National Assembly (MNA) Aamir Mehmood Kiani on Thursday visited Gawalmandi area to inspect Nullah Lehdredging and desilting work. On the occasion he said that the project was being completed with heavy machinery under 'Kidmat Aap Ki Dehleez Par' program launched by the Punjab Government. During his visit he reviewed the pace of work from Gawalmandi bridge and directed the authorities concerned to complete the project within shortest possible time frame.

On the occasion, Chairman, Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) and Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) was also present. He directed the Rawalpindi district administration officers to take solid steps to remove encroachments from banks of Nullah Lehd. He also instructed the department concerned to take strict action against rules violators and those dumping building solid waste and garbage in Nullah Lehd. He was given a detailed briefing on the arrangements for cleaning of Nullah Lehd.

Amir Kiani said, 'Kidmat Aap Ki Dehleez par' is a unique program launched by Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar. Heavy machinery was being used at different points to improve flow of water in the nullah particularly during monsoon season, the MNA said adding, additional funds would also be provided to complete the project before start of rains. — APP

## Ulema urged to remove doubts about vaccine

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Amir Aqique Khan on Thursday urged the Ulema to help the government in removing misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine to eradicate the dangerous disease from the country.

Chairing a meeting of the district peace committee here at his office, he asked the religious scholars to create awareness among people to protect them from contracting Covid-19 and contain the spread of the virus. Amir requested the ulema to promote religious harmony and unity and reject the narrative of those miscreants who were promoting hatred on social media.

He appreciated the cooperation of the ulema in implementing SOPs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Asad inaugurates first private sector free vaccination center

The facility has the capacity to inoculate around 3000 to 4000 persons daily including the members of the business community, employees, their families and visiting customers of 30 years plus age

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Planning and Development has inaugurated the first corona vaccination center established in the private sector in collaboration with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) at the Centaurus, Islamabad for free of cost vaccination of people. Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad (East) Babar Sahib Din, Dr. Muhammad Zaem Zia District Health Officer Islamabad, ICCI Executive Members and others were present at the occasion.

The vaccination center has been set up at Centaurus with all required facilities including doctors & nurses, recovery rooms and separate counters for males and females for vaccination. The facility has the capacity to inoculate around 3000 to 4000 persons daily including the members of the business community, employees, their families and visiting customers of 30 years plus age. Addressing the inaugural cere-



mony as Chief Guest, Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Planning & Development appreciated the efforts of Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry for taking lead in setting up the first vaccination centre in private sector at Centaurus and hoped that it would be a catalyst for others to join hands with the government in its mass vaccination drive across

Pakistan. He said that the government has decided to vaccinate at least 70 million people by the end of current year to reduce the adverse effects of Covid-19 pandemic that would help in removing restrictions on businesses. He said that the government is expediting the vaccination drive by engaging the public and private sectors including chambers of commerce to achieve the target of herd immuni-

ty so that business and economic activities could be restored to normal routine. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry lauded the government initiative for increasing the outreach of vaccination drive in collaboration with private sector as it was the only way to overcome the spread of Covid-19 pandem-

ic and revive business activities across the country. He said that to support the government's vaccination campaign, ICCI has taken the initiative in collaboration with DHO ICT to set up the first vaccination centre in the private sector at Centaurus to set a precedent for others. He said that Centaurus was getting a foothold of thousands of people daily shopping and availability of a vaccination centre would be a great convenience for them to get vaccinated. He assured that ICCI would work with DHO ICT and NCOC for setting up more vaccination centres in main markets and industrial areas in Islamabad to make the federal capital corona free city of the country. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the Covid positivity rate was lowest in Islamabad and emphasized that the government should abolish safe days in the federal capital and increase timings for businesses up to might during summer season as increasing the time span for business activities would help avoid overcrowding in markets and overcome the spread of coronavirus.

## 12,824 more persons get anti-COVID jobs

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The total district tally of coronavirus vaccination Thursday reached 397,397 with the inoculation of 12,824 more persons against the deadly virus during the last 24 hours. According to fresh data released by the District Health Authority, 26,198 health workers while 371,199 other people including senior citizens have received their dose so far. The report said that the district health authority has registered 33 new infections during the last 24 hours including 31 of Rawalpindi and two from outside the district while three people lost their battle of life. It updated that patients reported during the last 24 hours included 8 belonged to Rawal Town, 3 Potohar town, 8 Rawalpindi Cantt, 9 Kahutta, and two each from Islamabad and Gujjar Khan. "Presently 62 confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city including 17 in Holy Family Hospital, 14 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 18 in Institute of Urology, 9 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 3 in Bilal hospital and one in Hearts International", he added. The report elaborated that 3 patients were on the vent in critical condition, 23 on oxygen and 36 in stable condition.

## QAU 100th among Asia's leading Universities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Qaid-i-Azam University (QAU) has secured the 100th spot among Asia's leading Universities and ranked top in Pakistan by Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021 for Asia. In this category, the ranking agency focused on universities in Asia analyzing the indicators for research productivity, knowledge transfer, research income, teaching, and research reputation. In a message, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali, Vice-Chancellor Qaid-i-Azam University (QAU) congratulated the faculty, researchers, staff, and students, on this remarkable achievement, lauded their dedication and hard work. "Despite the financial constraints QAU is performing wonderful, nurturing excellent talents in the field of science. I am proud to head a great university and proud of our students, staff, faculty, and alumni" said the Vice-Chancellor. Qaid-i-Azam University has also significantly improved its ranking in the recently announced QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021.

## Mian Soomro chaired PC Board meeting

ISLAMABAD: The 4th Privatization Commission, Board meeting of the current year held on Thursday under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister and Chairman Privatization Mian Soomro. Federal Secretary, Board members and senior officers of the Ministry attended the subject meeting. Various important issues including privatization of SL services International Hotel (SIH), hiring of audit firms for external audit, the status of the sale of federal government properties, PECO and update on the overall privatization program was discussed. The status of the sale of 26 Federal Government properties was also discussed, initially 23 out of 26 properties were sold through open bidding in September last year, while three properties remained unsold. The hiring of financial advisors (FAs) for the sale 17 unsold properties was approved by the board, earlier the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) approved the proposal for the hiring of FAs for the sale of remaining properties. The matter regarding the delisting of Pakistan Engineering Company (PECO) from the active privatization list on account of inherent issues was unanimously approved by the board. — APP

## PTCL, NUCES signed MOU to improve customer experience

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (NUCES) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a long-term research and development activities that will mutually benefit academia and the industry. As a first step both are working to develop Artificial Intelligence based Speech Analytics that uses cutting-edge research and technology to find customer sentiments using AI based analytics and to evaluate recorded calls for the purpose of Quality Assurance of Customer Services. The signing ceremony was attended by Moqem ul Haque, Chief Commercial



and Group Strategy Officer, PTCL Group and Dr. Mohammad Ayub Alvi, Rector, NUCES, along with senior officials from both sides. This state-of-the-art system of Speech Analytics will be able to analyze customers' sentiments by scanning records based on a defined set of Call Quality Metrics. As a result, the system will flag calls in which quality of Customer Services was not up to the standard.

On this occasion, Moqem ul Haque, Chief Commercial and Group Strategy Officer, PTCL Group, said, "We are excited to partner with NUCES for this initiative as latest techniques and solutions will be explored for better customer services through this collaboration. Using this research, it can possibly be scaled to solve several similar issues that are prevalent in the telecom industry of Pakistan. It is a unique and

one-of-a-kind development initiative for Urdu language with wider applications in Customer Care and Contact Center domain that will positively impact multiple industry verticals."

On this occasion, Dr. Mohammad Ayub Alvi, Rector, NUCES, said, "We are excited to collaborate with PTCL who has taken a leading role towards agile processes and automated systems. The development of this Avant methodology will enable PTCL Customer Care Quality Assurance team to analyze innumerable recorded customer interactions with Contact Centers without any major workforce and manned hours. Such collaboration between corporate sector and academia plays a key role for mutual benefit and to develop a long-term R&D partnership."

## Elimination of land-grabbers top priority: SSP

The action was taken on the complaint and SP (City) was directed for immediate action

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior-Superintendent of Police (SSP) (Operations) Islamabad, Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanweer has said that the force was determined to eliminate land mafia in the city. He said as envisioned by the incumbent government, the police would fight out the land-grabbers and in this regard, a grand operation was already in progress. Last night, he said, the police conducted an operation against land grabbers in area of Bhara Kahu Police Station. He said that the action was taken on the complaint from a citizen and SP (City) was directed for immediate action.

Following these directions, Bhara Kahu police under supervision of SP (City) Muhammad Umar Khan and headed by ASP Asad Ali, SHO Bhara Kahu Habib Butt along with other officials conducted operation and arrested 3 land-grabbers namely Shah Muhammad Baloch, his co-accused Mir Chakar Baloch, residents

of Phulgran and Qaisar Mehmood resident of Tumair, Islamabad. Accused Shah Muhammad Baloch has previous criminal record in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and in police stations of ANF Punjab and was involved in 11 cases of dacoity, fraud, car theft, drug peddling etc. Accused Qaisar Mehmood was wanted in 2 cases registered at Nilore police station. He was also involved in 20 cases of terrorism, possessing illegal weapons, threatening people, firing and other crimes of heinous nature. Further investigation from other suspects is underway. IGP Islamabad Qazi Jamil Ur Rehman and DIG Operations Afaal Ahmad Kausar have appreciated this performance of Bhara Kahu police station. IGP Islamabad has categorically ordered all police officers to continue crackdown against land-grabbers in the Capital. He said that prime responsibility of police is to protect the lives and property of citizens and all out efforts would be made in this regard.

## Mushahid terms proposed US law as 'recipe for a New Cold War'



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman, Senate Defence Committee, while giving his Keynote Address at Seminar on the China-specific 'The Strategic Competition Act: Implications for China and the region' currently under debate in the US Congress, termed it as a new form of political and economic discrimination directed against China and friends of China the world over. He called it 'a recipe for a New Cold War' which

would destabilise the global order. Citing clauses of the proposed Act, Senator Mushahid Hussain termed its assumptions flawed and false, stemming from a zero-sum-game mindset. He said the Act is tantamount to an intrusion into not China's internal affairs but also in foreign relations of other countries that have long-standing ties to China. He likened The Strategic Competition Act to the racist 'China Exclusion Act' of 1881, which US Congress passed to disallow visitors from China in the 19th Century, but the Strategic

Competition Act, in the 21st Century, is also discriminatory on political, economic and educational grounds. Senator Mushahid Hussain termed the formation of proposed 'Countering Chinese Influence Fund' under proposed Strategic Competition Act, which would provide \$ 300 million annually for media propaganda and disinformation campaigns directed against China, as well as the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) of which CPEC is the flagship project. Such a bill puts the US on the wrong side of history as the US cannot sustain such confrontation in the political and economic context of a shifting global power balance. Such a narrow legislation goes against globalisation and the international trend of connectivity and cooperation, which rejects confrontation and conflict which is what the Strategic Competition Act is all about.

## Bike lifter gang busted

RAWALPINDI: Police have busted a bike lifter gang and arrested its two members besides, recovering four stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, SHO City Police Station was constituted which after hectic efforts managed to net two accused namely M Waris and Nisar Ali. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz during his visit to National Institute of Electronics. — DNA

## COMSTECH for training on clinical trials for vaccine

It is all about joining hands and exerting collective effort to meet the challenges, and appreciated the contribution of all national institutions and individual scientists against the challenges raised by the COVID pandemic

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH in collaboration with Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) and International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICBS), Karachi organized one-day hybrid training on "collaboration among OIC member states for promotion of research culture in medicines and vaccines through strengthening and upgrading the clinical trials" on Thursday. The inaugural session was chaired by Maj. Gen. Aamer Ikram, Executive Director, National Institute of Health, Islamabad. Dr. Ab-

dur Rashid, Director, Division of Pharmacy Services, DRAP delivered welcome address. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH said that COMSTECH promotes soft image of Pakistan through its programmes in OIC member states. While discussing COMSTECH's latest initiatives he mentioned health and agriculture programmes started by COMSTECH for African member states in collaboration with Islamic Development Bank and Al-Shifa Eye Trust. He said that COMSTECH has established consortium of excellence comprising

best universities from OIC member states. He informed that COMSTECH has started scholarship scheme in collaboration

with the member institutions during the COVID pandemic. Dr. Choudhary appreciated the recent contribution

of science and technology during the COVID pandemic. He said that capacity building for clinical trials is most important, because without clinical trials no vaccine or medicine can be developed. In his inaugural address, the Executive Director, NIH, said all challenges bring opportunities along with them as well. There is a need to identify them and get benefit. He said it is all about joining hands and exerting collective effort to meet the challenges, and appreciated the contribution of all national institutions and individual scientists against the challenges raised by the COVID pandemic. He

informed that we conducted first time phase III clinical trials in which 80,000 people participated, and the output was very successful. He said that we need to enhance capacity for vaccine development, and we are going to establish a specialized center for vaccine development. He appreciated the contribution and role of DRAP. Director, DRAP, highlighted the role and contribution of the Authority and appreciated the organization of this event and recommended to have such capacity building joint events in future. More than 220 people participated in the event online and in-person.



## Controlling the media

PAKISTAN has very often been right at the edge of – and some would argue even smack in the middle of – an authoritarian information order. Over the years, varying governments have tried varying repression tactics to stem whatever little freedom journalism has managed to carve out for itself in the country. Now, though, the chokehold on journalists may just become a legally sanctioned reality. A read-through of the proposed draft of the Pakistan Media Development Authority Ordinance, which has been doing the rounds on social media, shows a state insistent on controlling the entirety of the media industry – no matter principles of fairness or right to know or freedom of expression. The proposed law essentially sets up a new body called the Pakistan Media Development Authority. This 'Authority' is to take the place of most other media regulation by repealing and taking the place of laws such as: the Press Council Ordinance, 2002; the Press, Newspaper, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, 2002; the Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) Act 1973; the Pakistan Electronic Media Ordinance 2002 as amended by the Pemra Amendment Act 2007; and the Motion Pictures Ordinance 1979. Other details aside, what is most disturbing is the extent of its authority. It appears that what our government wants is a silent state. If this draconian ordinance gets approved as is – and without major changes, not minor tweaks – no journalist or media professional, or even a common person uploading something on social media, will be far from an iron clutch ready to grasp the neck of the dissenter. And let us not forget that where we stand today a dissenter can be anyone who raises a critical voice from any platform. The desire to impose a uniform narrative has already badly damaged our educational system, and now the media seems to be in the production line. At a time when the media stands as one of the most important and necessary requisites for democracy, justice and an open society, it is disappointing to see such an openly regressive attempt to curb free speech and the right to know. Running roughshod over an institution indispensable to a functioning democracy will only hurt the country and strengthen the largely-held view that this is not a government willing to tolerate any kind of freedom of thought or speech or expression.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 02 Issue: 28

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## Shifting timelines

REPORTS have recently been in circulation that the US could withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan by July 4, well ahead of the September 11, 2021 deadline set by President Joe Biden last month. This potential shift in the timeline once again illustrates that the US has not thought through this exit, which only adds to the uncertainty and challenges facing the Afghan government. Questions will rightly be raised regarding the rationale of this pre-emption; the chances of a political settlement being agreed upon by September appeared slim, so one wonders what breakthrough the US hopes to engineer by July. Unless of course, the US itself has given up on the idea that a lasting power sharing agreement can be achieved between Kabul and the Taliban. Though the Taliban have agreed to participate in the upcoming intra-Afghan talks in Istanbul, it looks to be increasingly unlikely that the talks will make any substantial headway with regards to contentious issues. The Taliban have stated as a condition that the agenda of the conference should not include decision-making on critical issues, and that they will be sending a low-level delegation to participate in the talks. With a delegation that lacks decision making authority and critical issues being sidelined, the conference will only further the optics of international actors and the US being committed to the "process". In the absence of any talks between the two parties and a surge in violence, it is increasingly likely that a civil war is on the cards. Over the past few weeks, the Taliban have captured several key districts after overrunning a number of military bases. On Tuesday, three bomb attacks in Kabul claimed the lives of at least 10 people. This worsening situation is of particular concern to Pakistan. Violence has already started to spill over into its territory, as was illustrated by the multiple attacks that have taken place in Balochistan and North Waziristan during the last two days. The further intensification of this civil war in the absence of a political settlement could lead to a security nightmare for Pakistan. Groups such as the TTP which have sanctuaries across the border are being emboldened by the departure of foreign forces and the dominance being exerted by the Taliban on the battlefield. It is imperative that we take this threat seriously and pay special attention to our traditional border and territorial security.

# Will Israel be held accountable for war crimes?

Jessie Williams

“Not only the whole waiting area was affected but also one of the main sterilisation rooms, which we use to prepare materials and to sterilise the tools which we use in all our outpatient departments. So it's vital that we are able to get back to normal as quickly as possible.”

Roads leading to Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility in the Gaza Strip, were also damaged, along with the only COVID-19 testing laboratory in the enclave. Israel's military claims it was only targeting buildings with links to Hamas and other armed groups. However, Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Human Rights Centre based in Gaza, refutes this

LIKE tens of thousands of people in Gaza, Aymen al-Djaroucha had to flee his home with his family last month during the 11 days of fighting between the Israeli military and Palestinian armed groups, mainly Hamas, which controls the blockaded enclave. Birds sing outside the window of his office as the father of three explains what it feels like to leave the place where you've spent the last 12 years – without any of your belongings. “You have all your memories there, it's where our children grew up, where we spent time with each other and shared happy moments and difficult moments. All my life was there.” But, he had to leave. The Israeli military phoned the apartment block's caretaker on May 14 to warn families to evacuate. They bombed it less than an hour later, destroying several flats and causing a fire that ripped through the building. He has since been back to assess the scale of the damage and to “try to return to my normal life”, he says. “The flats above the eighth floor were badly destroyed by the fire and it was very hard for the civil defence to extinguish it. We have a lot of repairs to do inside and on the stairwell and a lot of cleaning.”

“Get back to normal”

It was one of several high-rise buildings in Gaza City targeted by Israeli air strikes, including the al-Jalaa building that housed several media organisations, such as Al Jazeera and The Associated Press bureaus. The skyline of the metropolis – home to almost 600,000 people – has been significantly altered since May 10 when hostilities escalated. Along with at least 2,000 housing units destroyed and more than 15,000 other units damaged, Gaza's already run-down infrastructure was also badly hit. The United Nations reported that six hospitals, nine healthcare centres and a water desalination plant were damaged during the fighting. Al-Djaroucha, who works as the project coordinator in Gaza for Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, or MSF), says their burns and trauma clinic was damaged by an air strike. “Not only the whole waiting area was affected but also one of the main sterilisation rooms, which we use to prepare materials and to sterilise the tools which we use in all our outpatient departments. So it's vital that we are able to get back to normal as quickly as possible.”

Roads leading to Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility in the Gaza Strip, were also damaged, along with the only COVID-19 testing laboratory in the enclave. Israel's military claims it was only targeting buildings with links to Hamas and other armed groups. However, Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Human Rights Centre based in Gaza, refutes this. “It wasn't Hamas targeted; it wasn't PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] targeted; it wasn't Islamic Jihad targeted. I believe it was civilians targeted,” he says. “From the first hour of the first day [of the recent es-

calation], civilians were the targets of these most high-tech airplanes – F16 and F35 – with rockets designed for military targets and you see these things targeting precisely. Tens of children and women killed. Nothing can justify that,” he adds. Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, accused Hamas of using civilians as “human shields”. But, addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council last week, the UN human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, said they have not seen evidence to support Israel's claims that the buildings they bombed in Gaza were “hosting armed groups or being used for military purposes”. Even before the recent eruption of violence, the International Criminal Court (ICC) had opened an investigation into previous bouts of the continuing conflict, and last month the ICC's chief prosecutor said she was closely monitoring what was happening on the ground. Both sides have been accused of committing war crimes; Hamas for firing rockets indiscriminately into civilian areas in Israel – although out of more than 2,000 rockets, about 640 fell short into the Gaza Strip and 90 percent that crossed the border were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system – and Israel for repeatedly bombing densely populated civilian areas within Gaza. A legal attack? At this stage, information is still being gathered, but Yael Stein, research director at B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, believes that Israel's bombardment of civilian structures within Gaza violates international law. “In order for an attack to be legal, it has to be both directed at a military target and be proportionate,” she explains. For a building to be a military target, the destruction of it should give a military advantage to Israel. To be proportionate, you have to judge whether the military advantage you anticipate to receive from the bombing is higher than the loss to the civilian population. Stein adds even when civilians were given some warning about when to evacuate, which saved lives, civilian property was still demolished and that “is still part of the calculation”. “I think that the past proves that the Israeli army is interpreting this principle in a much wider way than the drafters of international law never expected, and that it is far from what can be considered to be proportionate,” she says. Netanyahu has accused the ICC of “pure anti-Semitism” for investigating attacks and has said Israel does not accept the ICC's jurisdiction, however, it does not have to. Stein says the court can work without Israel's acceptance. But, it will be a long time until anybody – whether Hamas leaders and/or Israeli officials – will be held accountable for their actions by the ICC. “We're just starting the procedure which will take years until the investigation will actually take place and then more years until somebody will be charged and then more years until somebody will be in jail,” she says.

The lack of enforcement mechanisms within international humanitarian law is a problem, she adds. “So states can violate the basic norms of international law and nothing will happen.”

Unforgiving siege

Eric Goldstein, acting executive director for the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch, says there has been a shift in international awareness and willingness to look at Israeli war crimes. The UN Human Rights Council's recent decision to launch a continuing inquiry into human rights abuses in Israel and Palestine is a “welcome step”, which he urged Israel to cooperate with. “We're going to push hard at the ICC so that they look at war crimes committed by all parties,” Goldstein says. But, long-term peace will not be possible unless the “underlying root causes are addressed”, the main one being that Gaza is viewed as the largest open-air prison in the world – the enclave has been under an unforgiving siege imposed by Israel for more than 14 years, ever since Hamas took control of Gaza. “That leaves people there with no future, with no hope and with their rights being violated almost on a daily basis,” says Stein, adding the international community needs to put pressure on Israel to stop this. “You have to treat those people as human beings, as equal people that deserve the same rights as every other people in the territory under Israeli control.” Goldstein adds the oppression of Palestinians, which “amounts to a situation of apartheid”, feeds into the conflict and gives Hamas “certain political support”. The United States, in particular, needs to “take a harder look at its unconditional support for Israel”, and parties helping Hamas “commit their war crimes, logistically or providing material” should stop, he says. Both Israel and Hamas announced victories at the end of the 11 days of fighting, with Israel saying they killed nearly 30 senior Hamas commanders and destroyed 340 of their rocket launchers, as well as 130km (60 miles) of underground tunnels. The number of Palestinians killed last month in Gaza stands at 256, including 66 children. In Israel, 13 people were killed, including two children. The Palestinian Human Rights Centre's Sourani, who has lived through the previous three wars, says he has never experienced anything like this latest period of violence. “I'm honestly telling you that for 11 days I never thought dawn would come and I would see the sun rise again.” Every family in Gaza has been affected: many loved ones lost, livelihoods destroyed and homes reduced to rubble, Sourani says. “What did the al-Hadi family do [to deserve this]?” he asks, referring to the family that lost 10 members in an Israeli air strike – only the father and baby boy survived. Accountability, he says as the call to prayer echoes in the background, “means that this will not be repeated once again.”

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

# Empowering Women: an inevitable segment of society

Hira Ali Malik



There is Social Welfare department with a special focus on Women Empowerment Institutions such as Women Crisis Centers, Vocational Training Centers and Working Women Hostels in different districts of the province

BACK in early 1990s, under Literacy and Mass Education Commission (LAMEC) my mother went from village to village, as Supervisor Quranic Literacy Project (1992-94) to open community-based schools for women. Records reveal that even before 1990s there were decades of planning and policy making towards women education and skill building. It is heartening to see that the struggle towards educating women and establishing them on stable economic footings was continued for years. And to date, many baby-steps have been taken by both the government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) for uplifting and empowering the women. Although, there were several projects and programmes working to achieve outcomes that could make a difference, but, such a huge funding allocated specifically for the vulnerable segment could still not create a much greater impact, to bring a significant change in the overall picture. For instance, only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) there are different departments and NGOs working in the education, health, social sector, skill development, infrastructure etc. it still calls into question the performance of these organizations and the outcomes achieved. Now let us take some of the departments in KPK province for a clear understanding of the scenario. One such example is the revolutionary governance model that the government has embarked upon, entitled as Community Driven Local Development (CDLD). CDLD is a policy of the government of KPK, rather an aspiration of the citizens to improve their lives and livelihood. This programme undertakes a broad range of projects in various major sectors such as health, education, sports, roads, agriculture, social works etc. Under the CDLD program government of KPK is committed to advancing equality between males and females, therefore, about 20% of its annual budget is allocated for women specific projects. Here one may ask, is this twenty percent fund serving the right purpose i.e. 'to improve the lives and livelihood'. Are the women specific schemes targeted at generating income and achieving financial stability?

Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered in affirmative because majority of the projects approved serve other basic necessities which are not entirely targeting the females but the whole community. Besides this, CDLD approves projects incorporated in Village Council Development Plan (VCDP), but, it is pertinent here to inquire if women do have a say in these development plans or not. In most of the cases the livelihood projects specifically for women are not even included. Even though, there are many schemes completed under CDLD particularly in health and education sector, but, livelihood and income generation remain a far cry. Similarly, there is Social Welfare department with a special focus on Women Empowerment Institutions such as Women Crisis Centers, Vocational Training Centers and Working Women Hostels in different districts of the province. The total beneficiaries of vocational centers alone for the year 2016-17 was eleven thousand three hundred and six (11,306) as reported by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW). Though, the beneficiaries are in huge numbers, yet these centers demand innovation. Innovation can be brought in the vocational training centers by introducing technology and use of modern entrepreneurial skills, something that can deviate from the monotony of ages. Another challenge this department faces is paying rents for the buildings they use; the buildings are usually rented which if owned publicly can save a valuable amount that could be invested more effectively. Unlike CDLD, Social Welfare does not have enough budget to invest in infrastructure. Instead the rental charges for the said centers during 2016-17 were Rs. 958,300 per month as reported by KPCSW. That's how the meager funds of department allocated for women, hardly serve the purpose to the deemed extent. Thirdly, departments like SMEDA which are operating in KPK with a mission to assist in employment generation and value addition to the national income. SMEDA unlike Social Welfare has introduced many innovative

ideas to engage women in businesses. Also, alongside innovation, SMEDA focusses on empowering women to the level that the role of middleman is reduced if not fully over. Yet again SMEDA also faces challenges which if surmounted can result in a significant change. One bigger concern as highlighted by the Director Policy & Planning Dr. Nadia Jahangir Seth is the infrastructure constraint which if resolved by engaging a local partner or by other interventions of policy, has a huge potential to grow and innovate. In the light of these few examples and the limitations they are facing, it can be realized that there is a dire need of creating a conducive policy environment to identify the issues whether they are related to technology, funding, infrastructure, human resource development or skill building. Despite governmental commitment to reduce gender disparities, nothing has been done to evolve a suitable action plan to elevate women socio-economic status. The Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) is also made with the same objective i.e. to strengthen the voice of the women legislators, but, the Chairperson WPC Dr. Sumera Shams is also of the opinion that, “there is a lot being done still we feel the need to do more for empowering women.” In furtherance, the programs and policies highlighted above are all visionary however, their impact on the grass root level is yet to be achieved. Nonetheless, the solution lies in partnering to get collective outputs on the similar aims and objectives. This can only be achieved by gathering representatives from all departments on one platform to consult each other's problems and suggest best possible assistance. Such a collaboration can fill in the gaps and can endeavor to facilitate creating a colossal impact. Meanwhile, WPC can play a vital role in bringing a monumental change by providing a sound support to this joint move leading to women empowerment in the true sense of the word.

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**Briefs**

*U.S. airlifts COVID-19 supplies...*

From Page 01

This support has benefited more than 2.5 million Pakistanis across the country, providing life-saving treatments, strengthening case-finding and surveillance, and mobilizing innovative financing to bolster emergency preparedness. For more information about USAID's COVID-19 response in Pakistan, click here. In Sri Lanka, this assistance includes 880,000 vital pieces of personal protective equipment and 1,200 pulse oximeters to support front-line healthcare workers and others most affected by the current outbreak. The United States and Sri Lanka have worked closely together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic since its outset, and USAID's assistance has benefited millions of people in all 25 districts and nine provinces across the country, providing life-saving treatments, strengthening clinical care, and mobilizing critical supplies to bolster the response.

The U.S. Government has previously provided \$11.3 million to assist Sri Lanka's COVID-19 response and recovery, including a donation of 200 ventilators to care for critically ill patients. This airlift exemplifies the United States' whole-of-government response to ensure assistance reaches people who need it quickly. The State of California's Office of Emergency Services generously donated commodities, USAID sourced PPE from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of State procured the aircraft being used for transport.

*Indonesian envoy lauds NIH role...*

From Page 01

The Indonesian ambassador to Pakistan, Ambassador Tugjo, lauded the United States' whole-of-government response to ensure assistance reaches people who need it quickly. He said that the Indonesian government is committed to supporting the United States' efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases in Pakistan. He also lauded the NIH for its leadership in the global fight against corruption. He said that the Indonesian government is committed to supporting the United States' efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases in Pakistan. He also lauded the NIH for its leadership in the global fight against corruption.

*Pak, China, Afghanistan peace linked*

From Page 01

The foreign minister said since then, Pakistan had successfully moved forward this forum through a gradual, phased but consistent approach. He said the United States and NATO forces had already started withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. He said while the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan entailed serious security challenges, it also offered a unique opportunity for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan and moving the country from a perpetual internal conflict to an era of peace and stability. "We should, therefore, explore how our three neighbouring countries can work together to deal with the evolving situation in an effective manner and steer it towards achieving our shared objective of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region," he said. The foreign minister said Pakistan, China and Afghanistan were located in a region which had immense opportunities for fostering mutually beneficial economic and development cooperation. Our three geographically linked countries straddle historical routes traversing east-west and north-south, he added.

# Israel uses excessive force against Palestinians

**"The commission of violent and even deadly hate crimes justified seeing them as platforms of incitement to be monitored and closed," Amnesty wrote in a letter, saying this could reduce the horrific lynchings**

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: The United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, announced in a report that assaults on Palestinian citizens, carried out by right-wing and armed gangs, sometimes come with the support of elements from Israeli security forces. He called on Israeli authorities to provide full and equal protection to all living inside the occupied territories without any discrimination.

De Varennes then slammed the violence practiced by "far-right" groups and excessive use of force by Israeli security officials and forces during protests in recent weeks, describing them as the worst cases of

violence against Palestinians. He added that "the Palestinian minority in Israel is still paying a heavy price after long decades of exclusion and discrimination," complaining about "lack of availability of shelters and safe areas in Palestinian villages located in Negev [desert]."

The senior UN official highlighted that "extremist groups use various means of communication to spread hatred, incite violence, and encourage use of weapons in attacks against Palestinians."

He finally called on the Israeli administration "to condemn all manifestations of violence, hatred and discrimination against Palestinians," stressing that Israeli authorities must immediately rein in extremist settlers for such attacks, and to ensure the protection of all

those living in occupied territories from discrimination.

On May 13, Amnesty International called upon Israeli authorities to "take action against platforms that allow incitement to hate crimes, such as groups on social networks and messaging applications" after a host of screenshots of hate-mongering messages were shared online.

"The commission of violent and even deadly hate crimes justified seeing them as platforms of incitement to be monitored and closed," Amnesty wrote in a letter, saying this could reduce the horrific lynchings.

"We turned to the police several times already ... and we reported on the plentiful and concrete evidence of organization of retaliatory actions against

Arabs," the letter added.

Amnesty's letter also urged Israeli officials to classify Lehava group, whose followers have instigated recent violence in the occupied territories, as a terrorist organization. Spiraling levels of crime and violence against the Palestinian communities as well as the Israeli police's inaction to curb violence have outraged Palestinian citizens of Israel, prompting tens of thousands of them to stage mass demonstrations.

Protesters took to the streets in the city of Umm al-Fahm north-west of Jenin on March 5 in what some reporters described as the largest rally against violence and organized crime in the Israeli-occupied territories since the 1980s. The demonstrators carried Palestinian flags and placards condemn-

ing the Israeli police racism and complicity with criminal gangs.

They said Israeli forces refused to crack down on powerful criminal organizations in the occupied territories. In recent years, there has been a steep rise in crime and violence against Arab communities across the occupied territories.

Since the beginning of 2021, 22 Arabs have died in violent Israeli attacks. According to Israeli police, 113 murders took place in Arab communities in 2020, making it the deadliest year yet. In 2019, at least 91 Palestinian citizens were killed as a result of violent Israeli crimes, accounting for 71% of the 125 homicide victims in the occupied territories, where the community makes up about 21% of the population.

**Ties with Tajikistan need...**

From Page 01

Chairman Senate also facilitated the President of Tajikistan on the 30th Anniversary of Tajikistan's Independence and 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan. Senate Chief said that the two countries are facing a common challenge of COVID-19. We are actively considering the proposal to send humanitarian assistance to combat COVID-19 to Tajikistan. There is marked unanimity of views on major international and regional issues and both the countries cooperate closely in the international and regional fora including UN, OIC, ECO and SCO. He said that both sides must continue to hold high level political dialogues and parliamentary interactions to deepen cooperation and accelerate follow up on various initiatives. He said that Parliamentary Friendship Groups between Pakistan and Tajikistan present in both Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan as well as in Majlis Mili (Upper House) and Majlis Namoyandgan (Lower House) of Tajikistan will be activated to further enhance parliamentary interactions between two countries.

Chairman Senate said that volume of bilateral trade in not commensurate with its true potential and existing ties. It needs to be enhanced through diversification and value addition in multiple sectors. Pakistan remains committed to further deepen and diversify bilateral ties, particularly in the field of energy, trade & connectivity, defense & security, culture and tourism.

**PML slams economic policies**

From Page 01

that the unemployment in the country has increased immensely and the progress on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC) has slowed down. He said the country's growth rate has turned negative, adding that the three-year performance of the government is in front of everyone. "We would have appreciated, if the government had done a good job." Speaking on the occasion, former prime minister and PML-N senior vice president Shah Khaqan Abbasi asked why the circular debt has doubled when every minister claimed in the assembly that the circular debt had been controlled. "The masses would suffer when incompetent governments would be formed with stolen elections," he added. Abbasi went on to say that in 2018, the price of per unit electricity was Rs 11.72 that has now reached Rs 19 per unit. He said the government's electricity revenue is more than Rs 300 billion from expenditure but per unit price of electricity had risen 62 percent in past three years. He said that the biggest problem of the country today is circular debt which has to be paid one day or the other, adding that the PML-N government had left circular debt of Rs 1,150 billion which has gone up to Rs 2,150 billion today.

**Oman to host FIH Hockey5s WCs**

ISLAMABAD: The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has appointed Oman as the host country for the inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cups (Men and Women) to be played in January 2024. The matches would take place in Oman's capital city, Muscat. The Hockey5s' flagship event was a brand-new FIH competition. A total of 16 teams per gender (3 per continent + Oman, as hosts) would take part in this very first edition, said a press release issued here. FIH had also received bids from India, Pakistan and Singapore to host this event. Continental Hockey5s qualifiers for the World Cup would be organized in 2022. FIH CEO Thierry Weil said, "We're looking forward to a wonderful inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cup in Oman. This surely will be a great boost for the promotion of hockey both in the country and in the whole region. We're convinced that Hockey5s will play a key role in the growth of hockey worldwide." - APP

**Pakistan to leave for England on June 25**

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan men's team will leave for England for the limited-overs series on June 25, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced today.

The national side were scheduled to leave for England on June 22, however, after a delay in the schedule of Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six, the side's departure have been delayed.

The side will leave via a chartered plane for Manchester from where they will be transported to Derby for the mandatory room isolation period and training session.

The side will move to Cardiff on 6 July where the first One-Day International will be played on 8 July.



ISLAMABAD: German ambassador to Pakistan Bernhard Schlagheck in meeting with the opposition leader in Senate of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and senior leader Pakistan Peoples Party, Senator Sheri Rehman. - DNA

**Munir Akram calls for 'robust' global efforts to fight corruption**

NEW YORK: The President of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Pakistani Ambassador Munir Akram, Wednesday called for strengthening international cooperation to fight corruption, which leads to massive outflows of illicit finance out of developing countries and is one of the main reasons for their economic under-performance. "Immediate and robust national and international action is needed to stop the bleeding of developing countries," he told a special session of the UN General Assembly against corruption. Stressing that corruption stifles opportunities for the poor, condemning them to a life of misery and inequity, Ambassador Akram said an estimated \$2.6 trillion, or 5 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), was lost annually to such behaviour, and developing countries lost \$1.26 trillion, nine times all official development assistance (ODA). Noting that the pandemic had pushed millions into extreme poverty, resulting in the loss of 250 million jobs, the ECOSOC chief said, "Allowing corruption and illicit financial flows to continue in these circumstances is nothing short of criminal." Robust national and international action was needed to stop the bleeding of developing countries, he added. Emphasizing that corruption must be addressed by the perpetrators, as well as the enablers, he said the establishment of global beneficial ownership registry would help identify perpetrators. While corruption must be tackled at the national level, he said it was equally important to impose penalties on the lawyers, accountants and all those enabling such behaviour, with global standards agreed and imposed to ensure this end. The absence of effective mechanisms to secure the return of stolen assets also had created a sense of impunity, he continued, and led to the parking of \$7 trillion in safe havens. Going forward, Ambassador Akram said the secrecy jurisdictions must be eradicated, and new legal instruments agreed to facilitate the obligatory return of stolen assets. - APP

**Lebanon tribunal scraps start of new trial**

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: Judges at a United Nations tribunal for Lebanon have scrapped a new trial against the man convicted of the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, because they expect the court to run out of money and be forced to shut down before it can finish. Last year the tribunal, located near The Hague, convicted Salim Jamil Ayyash, a former member of the Shia movement, Hezbollah, in absentia for the bombing that killed veteran Sunni Muslim politician Hariri and 21 others. That ruling is being appealed. A second case was meant to begin on June 16, prosecuting Ayyash for another assassination and other attacks on Lebanese politicians between 2004 and 2005. But in a decision published on Thursday on the court's website, the judges wrote they had cancelled the case, "considering it is futile to start a trial in June which is highly likely to be terminated in July due to lack of funds".

**Greece rolls out vaccine campaign for refugees**

FOREIGN DESK

LESBOS: Greece is launching a mass vaccination campaign for refugees, months after the first shots were rolled out to the wider population in early January. Starting Thursday, vaccinations will be offered to people living in refugee camps on the islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos. Those on the remaining island camps and the mainland will be offered the shots next week. Athens plans to inoculate more than 11,000 people living in refugee camps on the Greek islands against the coronavirus. According to the UNHCR, there are 91,945 recognised refugees in the country. More than five million first shots have been administered across Greece, which has a population of approximately 10.7 million people. The single-shot vaccine produced by Johnson & Johnson will be used, with staff from the Hellenic National Public Health Organ-

isation (EODY) responsible for administering the shots. Stephan Oberreit, head of Greece's Doctors Without Borders (MSF) mission, told Al Jazeera: "The vaccination of refugees and asylum seekers residing on the Greek islands against COVID-19 has been long-awaited. "We have been urging the Greek authorities to include this population in every step of the fight against COVID-19, so the vaccination is a very positive step. "MSF on Lesbos, in coordination with other medical actors and the national public health organisation, will be participating in the health promotion campaign taking place in Kara Tepe camp in the next few weeks."

According to officials, only about 15 percent of asylum seekers living in Greece have expressed interest in receiving the vaccine. Regarding concerns over possible vaccine hesitancy, Manos Logothetis, the head of Reception of Asylum

Seekers at the migration and asylum ministry, said he believes the uptake rate will grow when the campaign gets under way. "They have shown interest, while many have acquired immunity because they tested positive for the coronavirus. Most were asymptomatic," he said. "As soon as the vaccination starts, as it did in the general population, these trends will increase."

Abdul, a 20-year-old refugee from Afghanistan who has been living on Lesbos for nearly two years, said he was worried about getting the vaccine but would still take it. "I don't feel good [about it] and also my friends don't feel good but we have to be vaccinated," he told Al Jazeera. Greece started relaxing strict lockdown restrictions on May 14 as it began opening up for the tourist season. But rights groups had criticised the government for opening up to visitors while keeping refugee camps in the country under lockdown.

# Hajj pilgrims to get Pfizer vaccine jabs

Asad Umar said that it was not possible to remove restrictions without vaccination. The government's target is to increase the number of centers to 4,000. The federal minister further said that the countries asking for the preferred vaccine should reconsider their decision.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Asad Umar has said that the Pfizer vaccine is available in limited amount that is why it will be administered to Hajj pilgrims and work visa holders. Umar also spoke about the progress of vaccination against Covid-19 in Pakistan on Thursday. He said the vaccination campaign against Covid-19 would be successful since the government had taken the private sector and business community on-board and also planned to partner with non-governmental organisations to accelerate the campaign and make it more effective. He told reporters that there were around 1,700 Covid-19 vaccination cen-

ters in Pakistan at present, and the government planned to increase the number to 4,000.

Umar added that teachers and school staff were being vaccinated at a rapid pace in the country, which would contribute to the success of the campaign. The minister also lauded the Islamabad district health officer and other relevant city authorities, saying that a review during a National Command and Operation Centre meeting had revealed that the capital fared better than other cities in terms of vaccination and registration for vaccination.

The ratio of registrations for vaccination to the city's population is the highest in Islamabad, and so is the number of inoculated persons, the minister said.

**Vaccination certificates after first jab**

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Citizens who have received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine and are aspiring to travel abroad can now get the coronavirus vaccination certificate. The National Command and Operations Center (NCOC) on Thursday approved issuing certificates for partial vaccination - and now the people seeking to travel out of the country can obtain them. The certificate will be issued through National Database and Registration Authority's (NADRA) online system, while the national health ministry is authorised to make changes to the certificate as it may seem fit, the NCOC said. Meanwhile, during a meeting of the NCOC, with Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Asad Umar in the chair, the forum reviewed the implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) across the country. "The forum expressed concerns over the downtrend on non-compliance of SOPs .... and decided to take all possible steps to ensure implementation of SOPs along with pursuing the mass vaccination campaign," a statement said. The NCOC, in this regard, has directed all federating units to keep a check on the growing trend of non-implementation of SOPs to mitigate the possible spread of the disease in the country.

However, he added that the city authorities needed to further pace up vaccination and expressed hope that vaccination would also be sped up in other cities of Pakistan. The minister also tweeted about the government investing in the acceleration of the vaccination drive. A day earlier, the NCOC had announced a campaign to vaccinate 70 million people in the country by the end of current year. The campaign is aimed at reducing adverse effects of the viral disease to provide substantial flexibility to the business fraternity, enabling them to continue their businesses with minimum restrictions. Meanwhile, Pakistan's COVID-19 related death toll rose to 21,022 with 92 more deaths from the pandemic recorded on

Wednesday, the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) said on Thursday. According to the NCOC data, the eastern Punjab province recorded the highest number of deaths from the coronavirus epidemic at 10,132, followed by the southern Sindh province and the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province reporting 5,073 and 4,113 deaths, respectively.

The country on Wednesday also found 2,028 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, marking a 3.94 percent test positivity rate, said the NCOC, adding the total tally rose to 926,695, including 852,574 recoveries and 53,099 active cases. There are 3,630 patients who are currently in critical condition, according to the NCOC.

## Briefs

## Indian SC criticises vaccination drive

## FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court has sharply criticised the federal government over its coronavirus vaccination programme. The judges asked the government to explain why it was mandatory to register on an app for getting a jab. The court said this would hamper vaccinations across rural India where internet access is difficult.

The judges also questioned whether federal policy was making individual states compete against each other for vaccines.

India has administered more than 220 million doses since it began vaccinating in mid-January, but so far only 3% of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has opened up vaccinations for some 960 million eligible Indians without having anything close to the required supply. The shortage came amid a deadly second Covid wave and warnings of an impending third wave. The wave has since slowed - the number of daily infections has fallen from the peak of over 400,000 last month to 132,788 cases that were recorded in the past 24 hours. The Supreme Court said that asking people between 18-44 years to pay for their jabs was "arbitrary and irrational".

## Myanmar jails two journalists

## WEB DESK

YANGON: A court in military-ruled Myanmar has jailed two journalists under a colonial-era law that was recently revised to make spreading "false news" a crime, as part of a continuing crackdown on reporting in the troubled country.

A military court in southern Myeik on Wednesday sentenced Aung Kyaw of the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and Zaw Zaw, a freelance reporter for Mizzima News, to two years in prison over their reporting of the anti-coup protests that have swept Myanmar since the generals under Min Aung Hlaing seized power on February 1, the two publications said. Aung Kyaw, who live-streamed his arrest, is the third DVB journalist to be jailed since the coup triggered a wave of protests and calls for the restoration of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The security forces have responded with force, and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which has been tracking arrests and deaths says 841 people have killed in the violence.

## EU puts forward e-wallet proposal

BRUSSELS: EU citizens could soon store all their identity documents digitally, to be used with the wave of a smartphone or online, under a proposal unveiled Thursday by the European Commission. The European Digital Identity wallets would be used to store digital copies of passports, drivers' licences, bank statements, university degrees and other important papers, to be called on whenever an EU citizen needs to prove their identity. Users would have control over how much of that data is shared in each interaction. Importantly, the EU commissioner for digital matters Margrethe Vestager told a news conference, the e-wallets could be used as a safer, ad-free alternative when logging onto websites offering services.

"So you do not use your platform-specific account - like your Google account or your Facebook account - but that you can use your own identity. And because of that, you can decide how much data you want to share," she said. Vestager emphasised that the proposal - which would become law if adopted by the European Parliament and member states - would not be compulsory for EU citizens, but was designed to make their lives easier when dealing with government and commercial services. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman OGRA Masroor Khan hosted lunch for the journalists. Senior Director Media OGRA Imran Ghaznavi is also present in the picture. - DNA

## Netanyahu foes push for quick vote to end his rule

The new phase of political warfare began just hours after opposition leader Yair Lapid and his main coalition partner Naftali Bennett - an ideological odd couple - declared late on Wednesday night they reached a deal to form a new government

## FOREIGN DESK

TEL AVIV: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's opponents pushed on Thursday for a quick vote to end his record-setting rule, racing to head off what is expected to be a frantic effort by the premier and his allies to derail the newly announced coalition. The new phase of political warfare began just hours after opposition leader Yair Lapid and his main coalition partner Naftali Bennett - an ideological odd couple - declared late on Wednesday night they reached a deal to form a new government. The announcement triggered a complex process likely to stretch over the next week, giving Netanyahu time to try to pressure

coalition members ideologically aligned with him to quit the group. With the threat of possible jail time hanging over him in his ongoing trial on corruption charges, the 71-year-old is unlikely to allow his record 12 straight years to end without a messy fight, analysts warned. On Thursday, the master political operator was already on Twitter seeking to play on any last-minute misgivings among right-wing lawmakers about allying with the left against him. "All lawmakers who were elected with votes from the right must oppose this dangerous left-wing government," Netanyahu said. Should last-minute defections scupper the "change" alliance, Israel would likely have to hold yet another

election, the fifth in just over two years.

"Opening the champagne right now is a bit hasty," said Tamar Hermann, a political scientist at the Israel Democracy Institute.

The question is whether the coalition of 61 votes would hold together through a vote of the 120-member Knesset - and who would preside over that vote? Netanyahu has accused the former allies who joined the incoming coalition of betraying right-wing values. His supporters have demonstrated and launched vicious social media campaigns, repeating the message Netanyahu has been sending over the past week as the new coalition coalesced. One factor working in Netanyahu's favour: the parliament speaker is an ally

who could use his position to delay the vote and give Netanyahu more time to sabotage the coalition.

The prime minister and his allies called a meeting later Thursday to plot their next steps, and it was unclear whether his opponents could name a new parliament speaker to preside over a Knesset vote required to confirm the new government. If it goes through, Lapid and a diverse array of partners that span the Israeli political spectrum will end Netanyahu's record-setting, divisive 12-year rule.

Under the agreement, Lapid and Bennett will split the job of prime minister in a rotation. Bennett, a former ally of Netanyahu, is to serve the first two years,

while Lapid is to serve the final two years - though it is far from certain their fragile coalition will last that long. The historic deal also includes the small United Arab List, which would make it the first party of Palestinian citizens of Israel ever to be part of a governing coalition in Israel. United Arab List's leader Mansour Abbas, 47, has cast aside differences with prime minister-hopeful Bennett, an advocate of annexing most of the occupied West Bank. A dentist by profession, Abbas said he hopes to improve conditions for Arab citizens who complain of discrimination and government neglect.

"We decided to join the government in order to change the balance of political forces in the country," he said in a message to supporters after signing the coalition agreement. Abbas's party said the agreement includes the allocation of more than 53 billion shekels (\$16bn) to improve infrastructure and combat violent crime in Arab towns. It also includes provisions freezing demolition of homes built without permits in Arab villages and granting official status to Bedouin towns in the Negev desert, a stronghold for support, the party said. "I say here clearly and frankly: when the very establishment of this government is based on our support ... we will be able to influence it and accomplish great things for our Arab society," Abbas said.

## US military killed 23 civilians in 2020

## MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: The US military says its operations killed nearly two dozen civilians in foreign countries in 2020; an acknowledgement that observers describe as "woefully inadequate." The finding of a Pentagon report, parts of which released to the public, said the US operations in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq, killed 23 civilians and wounded approximately 10 others, during 2020. Most of the civilian casualties were reported in Afghanistan, where the Pentagon said it was responsible for 20 deaths.

Afghanistan, where the Pentagon said it was responsible for 20 deaths. One civilian was killed in Somalia in February 2020 and another in Iraq in March, it claimed. The finding of a Pentagon report, parts of which released to the public, said the US operations in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq, killed 23 civilians and wounded approximately 10 others, during 2020. Most of the civilian casualties were reported in Afghanistan, where the Pentagon said it was responsible for 20 deaths.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker national Assembly Asad Qaiser in a group photo with parliamentary delegation led by speaker of the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan, Sahiba Gafarova in Parliament House. - DNA

## Indonesia cancels Hajj again amid concerns over COVID

## FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia has cancelled the Hajj pilgrimage for people in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation for a second year in a row, due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. For many Indonesians, the pilgrimage is a once-in-a-lifetime event, with an average wait time of 20 years due to a quota system. "Due to the pandemic and for the safety of the pilgrims, the government has decided that this year it won't allow

Indonesian pilgrims to go again," the minister of religious affairs, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, said in a statement on Thursday. Yaqut said Saudi Arabia had not opened access to the Hajj. "It's not just Indonesia ... no countries have received quotas, because the memorandum of understanding has not been signed," he said. Pilgrims who had paid Hajj fees will be pilgrims next year, he added. Saudi Arabia barred Muslims abroad from attending the Hajj in 2020 in a bid to help

prevent the spread of COVID-19. The move was the first such ban in recent history. Authorities also dramatically reduced the number of pilgrims allowed to attend the rite to about 1,000 Saudi citizens and residents. The Saudi health ministry said in March that it will allow people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend the Hajj this year. But the Reuters news agency said in May that Saudi Arabia is again considering banning overseas pilgrims because of worries about the emergence of new coronavirus variants.

Two sources familiar with the agency said discussions told the agency that authorities will only allow domestic pilgrims who have been vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 at least six months before the pilgrimage. Before the pandemic enforced social distancing globally, some 2.5 million pilgrims used to visit the holiest sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina for the week-long Hajj, and the lesser, year-round Umrah pilgrimage, which altogether earned the kingdom about \$12bn a year, according to official data.

## Bill Gates to build next-generation nuclear facility

CALIFORNIA: Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates will build a next-generation nuclear plant at a soon-to-be-retired coal-fired power plant in Wyoming in the next several years, business and government officials have said. The plant will feature a sodium reactor and molten salt energy storage system and will perform better, be safer and cost less than traditional nuclear power, Gates said. Bellevue-based TerraPower, of which Gates is chairman of the board, and the PacifiCorp company, which is owned by Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway is working with Rocky Mountain Power, an electric utility serving Wyoming and other Western states, to put the Natrium reactor at one of four of the utility's power plants in Wyoming, with the location to be decided later this year. "We think Natrium will be a game-changer for the energy industry," Gates said by video link to a news conference hosted by Wyoming's Republican Governor Mark Gordon on Wednesday. - Web Desk

## Danish parliament to deport asylum seekers

The move was headed by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's Social Democratic anti-immigration government; 70 legislators voted for the proposal and 24 against

## WEB DESK

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's parliament has passed a law enabling the Nordic country to deport asylum seekers to countries outside Europe, defying calls to abandon the legislation from NGOs and the United Nations. The move was headed by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's Social Democratic anti-immigration government; 70 legislators voted for the proposal and 24 against on Thursday. The law allows Denmark, which has gained notoriety for its

hardline immigration policies over the last decade, to move refugees arriving on Danish soil to asylum centres in a partner country. There, asylum seekers would have their cases reviewed and possibly obtain protection in that country. In practice, people would have to apply for asylum at the Danish border and then be flown to a centre outside Europe while being processed. Denmark would foot the bill for the operation, but processing asylum requests would be carried out by the host country. "If you apply for asylum in Den-

mark, you know that you will be sent back to a country outside Europe, and therefore we hope that people will stop seeking asylum in Denmark," government spokesman Rasmus Stoklund told broadcaster DR. The wealthy Scandinavian nation has a declared goal of receiving zero asylum seekers and instead aims to only accept refugees under the UN's quota system. Denmark has yet to reach an agreement with a partner nation, but Stoklund said it was negotiating with several candidate countries. Critics worry the plan will undermine the welfare

of refugees while allowing Denmark to duck its obligations within the EU. The bloc's executive arm said it had "fundamental concerns" about the new law. "It is not possible under existing EU rules or proposals under the new pact for migration and asylum," said European Commission spokesperson Adalbert Jahnz, adding that the right to claim asylum was fundamental in the EU. Charlotte Slente, head of the Danish Refugee Council, said: "If a rich country such as Denmark is not willing to take responsibility, there is a signifi-

cant risk that countries hosting far larger number of refugees will also opt out and give up on global efforts to find joint and sustainable solutions." Similar moves in Australia and on some Greek islands had led to "serious incidents of detention, physical assault, slow asylum proceedings, lack of access to healthcare and lack of access to legal assistance", she said, adding the law sends a problematic signal "especially to the often poorer countries in the world, which take by far the greatest responsibility for the world's refugees".

## Pentagon chief, MBS discuss Yemen war

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States and Saudi Arabia have discussed the kingdom's protracted war on neighboring Yemen, as the Yemeni army steps up gains on the battlefield and retaliatory raids against the kingdom's soil. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) on Wednesday and they discussed regional security and the war in Yemen. Austin and MBS held talks on the "ongoing bilateral efforts to improve Saudi Arabia's defenses," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement.

Austin noted what he called Saudi Arabia's "recent successes in defeating Houthi (the Ansarullah movement) attacks on the Kingdom" and thanked bin Salman for working with US special envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking to end the Yemen war, Kirby said. In recent months, the Ansarullah movement, which runs the Sana'a government, has ramped up its military operations against Saudi Arabia, warning that it will continue to target Saudi positions, including airports and air bases, as long as the Saudi-led coalition is waging war and imposing a blockade against Yemen.

Backed by Western powers, the Saudi-led war was launched in March 2015 and has so far killed hundreds of thousands of Yemeni civilians, including women and children, and destroyed the country's vital infrastructure, leading to what the UN calls the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

## Elizabeth to meet Biden on June 13

## WEB DESK

LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will meet US President Joe Biden in London on June 13, the Buckingham Palace announced Thursday. "The Queen will meet the President of the United States of America and First Lady Jill Biden at Windsor Castle on Sunday, 13th June 2021," the Royal Family official account tweeted. The meeting will be the queen's first high-level meeting with a foreign leader after the death of her husband Prince Philip in April this year and Biden's first overseas trip since his election victory last year. Biden will come to the UK for the G7 summit, which is due on June 11-13 ahead of a NATO summit in Brussels on the 14th. In Brussels, he is expected to meet the leaders of NATO member countries, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The US president is also expected to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Brussels, according to an announcement from the White House.

## Russia, Belarus agree to counter West

MOSCOW: The security services of Russia and Belarus said Thursday that they will cooperate more closely to counter what they said were the West's "aggressive policies". Russia's foreign intelligence service, the SVR, and the Belarusian Committee for State Security, known as the KGB, made the announcement in identical statements after their heads met in Belarus. "In the spirit of traditional brotherly ties, Russia's SVR and Belarus's KGB agreed to conduct joint work to counter the destructive activity of the West aimed at destabilising the political and socio-economic situation across the Union State," the statements said. SVR chief Sergei Naryshkin and KGB head Ivan Tertel stressed the "importance of consolidating efforts" to respond to global challenges and new threats, the security services said. Russia and Belarus are part of a "union state" that links their economies and militaries. The countries have been discussing a closer integration as both of their ties with the West go from bad to worse. Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko has for years had a volatile relationship with Moscow, playing it off against the West and ruling out outright unification with Russia. - APP

**Briefs**

**Indian troops martyr 44 Kashmiris in 100 days**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the completion of 100 days of ceasefire between Pakistan and India, Indian troops in their continued acts of state terrorism, martyred forty-four (44) Kashmiris in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a Kashmir Media Service report released on the completion of 100 days of the ceasefire, the Indian troops destroyed and damaged at least twenty houses and structures during over 720 violent cordon and search operations in the occupied territory.

The Indian forces personnel detained 326 youth and injured over 143 people after using brute force, bullets, pellets and teargas shells during the period.

The political observers in Srinagar, talking to media men, said that there was no change on ground in Indian military violence and the anti-Kashmir policies of the BJP regime in occupied Kashmir. They maintained that Indian authorities continued their door to door search operations during the period, when people were facing economic sufferings due to military lockdown and COVID-19.

**Palestine questions India's UNHRC vote**

DNA

NEW DELHI: With the volatile Middle East situation raging on, Palestine on Thursday expressed concerns with India's abstention from a UNHRC vote for a commission that would probe human rights violations in the Israel-Palestine violence flare-up.

In a letter to Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, his Palestinian counterpart Riad Malki stated that India's abstention during the vote on May 27 "stifles the important work of Human Rights Council at advancing human rights for all people, including those of the Palestinian people.

India was among 14 countries that abstained from voting on a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council to launch an investigation into alleged violations and crimes during the 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. The resolution was adopted as 24 countries voted in favour of it while nine opposed it at the end of an all-day special session of the 47-member UN body at its headquarters in Geneva on Thursday. India abstained from voting together with 13 other member nations of the grouping. China and Russia were among those voting in favour.

**700 PIA employees possessing fake degrees**

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan on Thursday informed the Senate that as many as 700 employees of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) who were inducted on fake degrees and political ground during past governments tenure have been terminated so far.

In response to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, the minister said that those employees were not only terminated but also criminal and judicial actions were taken against them.

Regarding fake license of pilots, the minister said that licenses of 262 pilots were found suspicious. After due verification process, 50 pilots have been terminated, 32 suspended while cases of remaining pilots were pending in various courts.

He said the opposition should appreciate the present government's action against pilots possessing suspicious licenses.

**EU pledges 9 mn EUR for parliamentary development**

The EU Ambassador to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara, thanked GIZ and PIPS for their successful preparatory work and expressed her satisfaction in launching the project

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The European Union continues to support Pakistan in its efforts to strengthen good governance by signing a new 9 million EUR parliamentary support project.

The aim of the programme is to further consolidate democracy through working with the National Assembly, the Senate and the four Provincial Assemblies of Punjab, KP, Sindh and Balochistan.

The 3-year project will be implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), in consortium with the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS). The European Union will support the work of the six assemblies by strengthening their functioning in terms of capacity, transparency and accessibility as well as accountability towards Pakistani citizens. Specifically, the project consortium will build up capacity regarding the parliamentary core mandates of legislation, oversight, budget and representation. Additionally, the functioning of administrative and support services will be supported. The EU Ambassador to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara, thanked GIZ and PIPS for their successful preparatory work and expressed her



satisfaction in launching the project: "The EU has been a steadfast supporter of democratic progress in Pakistan for many years and with today's signature we enter the most ambitious phase of our support yet, focusing, for the first time, assemblies at the national and provincial levels at the same time. Good governance is the backbone of human and democratic development and plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation." Mr. Tobias Becker, Country Director GIZ commented: "We are honored that the Consortium of GIZ and PIPS has been entrusted by the EU Delegation and the Government of Pakistan, with the implementa-

tion of this highly significant project to support in the strengthening of democratic governance, and to work with the Honorable Members of Parliament and institutions that shape legislation and pave the way for the future human and democratic development of our partner country, Pakistan.

Furthermore, IP5 is the start of a strategic partnership between GIZ and PIPS under the aegis of the European Union's ongoing engagements to enhance the governance structures in the country.

As an EU member state marking 60 years of a rewarding development cooperation with Pakistan this

year, we also look forward to the opportunity to foster deeper ties with the Government of Pakistan through IP5".

Mr. Muhammad Anwar, Executive Director, PIPS, added that "the EU's Parliamentary Support Project certainly is a landmark initiative as it would enable the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) to work closely with GIZ in assisting the Members of Parliament across both sides of isles to develop insights on their arduous tasks of representation, legislation and oversight of the Executive by applying concepts of transparency, inclusivity and participation to

achieve effectiveness and efficiency in Parliamentary output at federal and provincial levels. In addition, the project will also undertake capacity building of the Secretariat staff of all legislatures in the country."

The new project responds to the priorities of the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan 2019, specifically to the joint priority "Democracy, Rule of Law, Good Governance and Human Rights" and is financed under the EU's development cooperation priorities from 2014-2020. Both strategic roadmaps support the implementation of the Vision 2025 and help achieving the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN in its Agenda 2030.

In Pakistan, the EU is committed to a stable, democratic and pluralistic country that respects human rights and benefits from its full economic potential by supporting sustainable and inclusive development for all its citizens. The EU provides Pakistan with about 100 million annually in grants for development and cooperation. Among other issues, the EU supports Pakistan in its efforts to tackle poverty, increase education, promote good governance, human rights, rule of law and ensure sustainable management of natural resources. EU-funded projects cover all of Pakistan with a special focus on Sindh and Balochistan.

**Corruption breeds injustice**

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has said that corruption breeds injustice, poverty, undermines social, economic norms of societies and affects the countries around the world. NAB being the focal agency of Pakistan under United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is determined to weed out this scourge of corruption and to make Pakistan Corruption free by adopting "Accountability for All" policy. NAB being the apex anti-corruption agency and mandated to eliminate corruption, corrupt practices, is operating through a three pronged strategy of Awareness, Prevention and Enforcement. In order to eradicate this evil from society, it has consistently engaged all stakeholders and is incessantly combating this national menace with unflinching resolve through its multi-pronged strategy, which has started yielding remarkable results.



**PML-N rejects RRR fact-finding report**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Punjab Spokesperson Azma Zahid Bokhari has rejected 'fact-finding' inquiry report into the Rawalpindi Ring Road (RRR) project.

Punjab Chief Secretary notified a three-member inquiry committee on April 27 but two of the committee members Jahangir Ahmed and Anwarul Haq wrote their dissenting notes. Moreover, Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar has deliberately rejected these dissenting notices.

Azma Bokhari said that Usman Buzdar approved the inquiry report based on the one-member's findings. The PML-N warned Punjab Chief Minister that he must refrain from taking such steps that will not be defensible in the future.

"Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar is playing a facilitator's role for Imran Khan, Zulfi Bukhari and Ghulam Sarwar in the Rawalpindi Ring Road scandal," she added. She alleged that billions of rupees have been embezzled from the treasury in this scandal.

**Over 1.5 mn vaccinated in Sindh**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Over 1.5 million people have been vaccinated in Sindh so far, quoting vaccination figures released by the provincial health department.

In the province overall 1,550,553 vaccine doses have been utilized till now, according to the Sindh Health Department.

Sindh has completed two doses of the vaccine in 4,29,223 persons, while 11,21,402 have got at least the first dose of the vaccine, provincial health department said. Sindh Corona Task Force to boost the momentum of vaccination in the province has decided to suspend the salaries of the government servants from July who will fail to get themselves vaccinated.

Pakistan has so far administered nearly eight million doses of COVID vaccine as the country has begun vaccination of people aged upto 19 years for the inoculation drive. According to statistics shared on the Twitter handle of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCO), as many as 305,093 people were administered COVID vaccine on June 01.

In a statement, National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) said that COVID-19 vaccines were being provided to all the provinces uninterruptedly.

**Vaccination of 18-29 years citizens starts**

ISLAMABAD: The scheduled vaccination has been started on Thursday for citizens of age group 18 to 29 years and the vaccination center and date will be communicated through SMS as per turn.

According to an official of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, the vaccination registration was already continued across the country as Pakistan's vaccine supply continues to improve and the country's vaccination capacity gets enhanced day by day.

He said that the country has locally finished a coronavirus vaccine with the help of Chi-

nese experts as the vaccine named PakVac has passed rigorous internal quality control checks and testing at the National Institute of Health (NIH) with the help of Cansino Bio Inc. China.

He said that the first batch of bulk vaccines was processed at the NIH plant, which was set up for this purpose last month by having a specially trained team. He said that due to the agreement on technology transfer, the National Institute of Health will be able to produce three million doses per month which will significantly reduce the country's dependence on other countries. - APP

**SCO officials call for strengthening connectivity**

DNA

BEIJING: Officials from Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries agreed to take measures, including strengthening connectivity, pushing forward e-commerce, building unified payment system, and deepening trade cooperation between member countries in order to offset the blow brought by COVID-19.

Against the backdrop of the transformation of the world's economic layout, triggered by the rise of Asia as new development hub, the SCO has provided a reliable platform helping the region to become one of the world's economic development centers, SCO

Secretary General, Vladimir Norov, said at a parallel session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Forum on People-to-people Friendship held in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei Province, according to Global Times.

Yet, he urged the organization to actively discuss ways to offset the blow exerted by COVID-19, as trade volume of members of the bloc has plummeted 15 percent during the pandemic.

Secretary General said that the initial preparation has kicked off. The preliminary work has focused on creating an optimized financial market and simplifying tax and customs clearance procedures, among other areas.

Meanwhile, it is important

to eliminate trade barriers between bloc members and build a unified payment system to ensure members have equal rights to enter each other's markets, said Norov.

During the conference, Andrey Denisov, Russian ambassador to China, said that relevant department of SCO countries are also discussing the possibility of building a diversified transportation corridor between member countries, the improvement of transportation infrastructure and the simplification of visa procedures to improve SCO countries' connectivity.

Norov said that countries have witnessed difficulties in transporting goods during the pandemic. For instance, there were not

enough containers for companies to transport cargo. Thus, the Secretary General proposed the development of a railway system to better connect SCO countries, as well as building logistic centers in places such as Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, to better connect central Asian countries.

He also emphasized that Hubei has its role to play in improving connectivity between SCO countries.

As a key point in the Belt and Road Initiative, Hubei is trying to further open up and looking forward to contribute more to the SCO development, said Li Lecheng, Executive Vice Governor of Hubei Province, at the conference.

**Chinese citizens to get work visa within 48 hours**

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid said Thursday that under the new policy approved by the government duration of a visa issued to a Chinese national would at least be for a period of two years.

Talking to China's ambassador to Pakistan HE Nong Rong who called on him in Islamabad, he said now two-year work visas would be issued to Chinese nationals within 48 hours. He told the visiting dignitary that the government had introduced a separate visa category for the Chinese citizens under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Rashid further said that special desks were being set up at Pakistan's airports for Chinese citizens. In response, China's ambassador to Pakistan HE Nong Rong said his country was extremely thankful to the government of Pakistan for facilitating the issuance of visas to the people of his country.

He expressed the hope that the facilities announced by the government of Pakistan would not only further cement Pak-China ties but would also attract investment and create job opportunities in CPEC and other projects.

Both of them expressed pleasure over the completion of 70 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Interior Minister thanked the Chinese envoy for supplying the coronavirus vaccine to Pakistan. - DNA

**Climate change: UK, Germany, Canada to help Pak**

Pakistan is amongst the most vulnerable countries in the world to the negative impacts of climate change. To combat climate change impacts, Pakistan has spearheaded innovative initiatives such as the Billion Tree Tsunami for which it has received international recognition



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is amongst the most vulnerable countries in the world to the negative impacts of

climate change. To combat climate change impacts, Pakistan has spearheaded innovative initiatives such as the Billion Tree Tsunami for which it has received international recognition; biodi-

versity and nature preservation initiatives; and, a green stimulus package to ensure a rapid recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

By mainstreaming adaptation and mitigation through ecologically targeted initiatives covering afforestation, biodiversity conservation, Pakistan will position itself firmly on an environmentally resilient pathway to sustainable growth and prosperity.

As part of its climate-resilient growth initiatives, Pakistan endeavours to establish a Nature Performance Bond with a defined set of ambitious ecosystem restoration targets to provide Pakistan with accelerated access to finance for development

The Governments of UK,

Canada, and Germany appreciate the Government of Pakistan's efforts towards launching this innovative initiative which could contribute significantly to promoting action on climate change and sustainable development.

We are looking forward to engaging in dialogue on the modalities of such a Nature Performance Bond that could enable a green recovery and accelerate natural capital restoration action in the country.

This bond will be developed

by a consortium of financial advisers consistent with market conditions thereby creating an enabling environment for private sector finance as well as non-traditional development partners to play their role in sustainable development.

